

15 February 2019

Dr Michele Bruniges  
Secretary  
Department of Education and Training  
50 Marcus Clarke Street  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr Bruniges

## PERFORMANCE BASED FUNDING FOR THE COMMONWEALTH GRANTS SCHEME

I write regarding the *Performance-Based Funding for the Commonwealth Grant Scheme - Discussion Paper* which was prepared by the Department of Education and Training in late 2018 (Attachment 1). On behalf of Charles Sturt University, I am pleased to provide a submission to the Department in response to the Discussion Paper.

Charles Sturt University is Australia's largest regional university, with more than 43,000 students and approximately 2,000 full time staff equivalents. Established in 1989, the University traces its origins to the formation of the Bathurst Experimental Farm and Wagga Wagga Experimental Farm in the 1890s. In one form or another, research, innovation and education has been integral to the University's character and mission for more than a century.

Charles Sturt University is a unique multi-campus institution with campuses at Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Canberra, Dubbo, Goulburn, Manly, Orange, Parramatta, Port Macquarie and Wagga Wagga, as well as various study centres located throughout regional, rural and remote south-eastern Australia.

The University's commitment to the development and sustainability of regional, rural and remote Australia is informed by the unique research focus undertaken, and the partnerships we have formed with each campus' local communities, resident industry and with the broader region it serves. Drawing on these connections, experiences and networks the University has adopted a leadership position in regional public policy development and program implementation.

Charles Sturt University provided a submission to the Halsey Review (refer, [http://www.csu.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/3050872/CSU\\_Submission\\_Regional-Rural-Remote-Education.pdf](http://www.csu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/3050872/CSU_Submission_Regional-Rural-Remote-Education.pdf)). Our submission recognised that effective regional, rural and remote education strategy must be customised and tailored to the needs of individuals, local employers and specific economies given the breadth and depth of regional diversity across Australia.

The University's submission provided detailed commentary and opinion, based on an extensive review of Australian and international literature, as well as our own comprehensive research across regional, rural and remote south-eastern Australia regarding education in non-metropolitan Australia. The University's submission addressed:

- the gap in educational achievement between regional, rural and remote students and metropolitan students;

- the key barriers and challenges that impact on the educational outcomes of regional, rural and remote students, including aspiration, access and equity;
- the appropriateness and effectiveness of current modes of education delivered to these students, including the use of information and communications technology and the importance of face-to-face regional, rural and remote education provision;
- the effectiveness of public policies and programs that have been implemented to bridge the divide;
- the challenges and opportunities to help students successfully transition from school to further study, training and employment; and,
- innovative approaches that support regional, rural and remote students to succeed in school and in their transition to further study, training and employment.

Further, Charles Sturt University's submission to the Halsey Review provided an extensive and detailed range of recommendations that the University believes would greatly strengthen Australia's regional, rural and remote education system for better economic, social and environmental outcomes for students and our communities across New South Wales and Victoria, as well as the rest of non-metropolitan Australia. An extract of which is provided for your reference at Attachment 2.

I believe that it is critical that governments, Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local invest in the future of our regions. Our regions are vital contributors to our national success and we must ensure that all Australians no matter where they live or work, have access to educational opportunities.

Education is a driver of economic growth and it provides the opportunity for our people living and working in non-metropolitan Australia to create wealth, employment, and contribute to the nation's future prosperity. To this end, the University's recommendations contained in our submission to the Halsey Review were designed to ensure that Australia has the ability to build a strong and sustainable education sector that delivers access and equity.

Subsequently, Charles Sturt University welcomed the Australian Government's recent response to the Halsey Review (refer,

[https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/australian\\_government\\_response\\_accessible\\_30\\_may.pdf](https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/australian_government_response_accessible_30_may.pdf)). In particular, the University was encouraged by the Minister for Education's proposal to develop a National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy that builds on the

Government's response to the Halsey Review. The University would like to see development and implementation of a strategy which comprises policy interventions and program investments that:

- Increase post-secondary study options for regional, rural and remote students.
- Strengthen financial, emotional and social support for regional, rural and remote students.
- Boost tertiary education and training aspiration in regional, rural and remote communities.
- Address regional, rural and remote disadvantage.
- Attract people and jobs to our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities.
- Implement and monitor a national strategy for regional, rural and remote education and training.

On 1 February 2019 I wrote to the Minister for Education regarding the National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy. My correspondence built on the University's submission to the Halsey Review and the *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education – Australian Government Response*. My letter contained a range of suggested policy interventions and proposed program investments that would not only strengthen regional, rural and remote education but would support the crucial role that university teaching, learning, research and engagement plays in regional resilience and prosperity. A copy of my letter is provided for reference at Attachment 3.

The policy position put forward in the *Performance-Based Funding for the Commonwealth Grant Scheme - Discussion Paper* and subsequent program design contemplated, in their current form would undermine regional, rural and remote educational outcomes. Further, the planned policy position and proposed program design would critically impact the ability of regional universities to service the economic, social and environmental needs of regional, rural and remote Australia.

Charles Sturt University is gravely concerned about the impacts of the planned policy position and proposed program design on Australia's regional cities, rural towns and remote communities. The policy and program would greatly constrain the ability of universities to provide regional leadership through teaching, learning, research and engagement.

The University developed and implemented a suite of strategies to service the tertiary education teaching, learning, research and engagement needs of regional, rural and remote Australia based on the market design of the demand driven system for higher education. The University's strategies are long-term, require substantial investment, depend on cultural change and are measured against multi-generational outcomes. Effecting these strategies for the benefit of Australia's regional cities, rural towns and remote communities necessitates sustained and continued public funding commitments.

Consequently, there is a need for clarity as to growth in places and indexation for base funding, these are two separate funding elements. For 2018 funding was frozen at the 2017 reconciled effective full-time student load (EFSTL) levels based on the load profile for the year. However, both student contributions and the Commonwealth contribution were indexed and funding rates published. The rate of indexation was 1.5 percent for 2018. This in effect means that the number of student places was reduced by the level of indexation that was published, but foregone. That is, if Charles Sturt University met its load profile of 2017 (that is, the frozen load profile) in 2018, it would be paid the same amount as it would had the load been 98.5 percent of the frozen 2017 level.

In 2019, again, the gross Commonwealth base amount is set at the 2017 frozen level, but again, indexation has been applied to both the student contribution and Commonwealth portion at 1.9 percent. For 2019, the University will receive the 2017 frozen gross amount for load between 96.6 percent (that is, 100 percent less 1.5 percent less 1.9 percent) and 100 percent of the 2017 load profile. This can be interpreted as being a 3.4 percent contraction in available places funded, or a 3.4 percent nominal cut in funding with the real discount exceeding this figure.

From 2020, funding for non-designated Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) bachelor places will grow in line with the working age population. It is important to understand growth in places and separately, the level of indexation applicable to the Commonwealth's portion base funding. The statements made in the Consultation Paper make reference to funding for bachelor level places will grow in line with the working age population growth, estimated to be 1.1 to 1.2 percent. This situation provides significant resource and financial challenges that impact negatively on sustainability for universities and provision of places for prospective students with the design and intent of this policy shift. It will in particular, impact on regional universities.

The University undertakes modelling for the next year and the following three years as standard budget practice. The University has modelled the impact of this change looking at the funding as would have applied with the funding caps, allowing growth in places by the anticipated increase in the working age population and indexation as currently applies to the Commonwealth and student contributions.

Alternate models have been undertaken to consider the scenario in which there is no growth in places and what might be the outcome under the performance based funding scheme element of the CGS contemplated by the Department where no amount is received, expected outcome based in median and a maximum amount where the median is increased by 50 percent. This is presented in the following table.

Scenario	2019 \$M	2020 \$M	2021 \$M	2022 \$M	Comment
Current Operating Grant Forecast	271	279 2.95%	285 2.15%	291 2.11%	Current target is to hit "Caps" in 2020, for Caps to grow by 1.1% and indexation @ 1.8%.
New Policy with funding Caps, no indexation	271	275 1.48%	277 0.73%	279 0.72%	Hit "Caps" in 2020, then growth in Student Contribution only, by 1.8%
Performance Based Funding Minimum	271	275 1.48%	277 0.73%	279 0.72%	PBF not met, no PBF amount paid
Performance Based Funding Median	271	277 2.21%	281 1.44%	285 1.42%	Assumes Median level PBF distribution & growth in student Contribution by 1.8%
Performance Based Funding Maximum	271	279 2.95%	285 2.15%	291 2.11%	Assumes a 50% increase in Median level PBF and growth in Student Contribution by 1.8%
Difference between Current Forecast and Median PBF	0	2	4	6	

Only in a circumstance where the Charles Sturt University receives the maximum (that is, average increased by 50 percent) does the University receive an equivalent level of funding and therefore, it is most likely that under this proposed change, the University will receive a lower level of funding. This will obviously restrict the level of resourcing available to meet the University's core mission and student support.

Under the proposed performance based scheme element of the CGS, student contributions will grow at a faster rate than the Commonwealth contribution, the impact being to increase the relative contribution a student will pay for their place. Further, the quantum of increase assuming an increase of 1.1 percent on the Commonwealth contribution and say 1.8 percent on the student contribution represents an increase of 1.4 percent overall, this does not keep pace with either the University's Enterprise Agreement nor the consumer prices index (CPI) and as a result, this represents a real decline in funding for the University in each successive year, meaning that there is a funding deficit accumulation issue that will not be able to be addressed by the University.

The key issues arising from these cuts to higher education funding are;

- The public have an expectation that student places will grow by the level of growth in the working age population. Having this same expectation and that indexation was payable on top of the growth in places universities have developed business plans and prepared operating budgets based on these financial assumptions.

Given the change in financial assumptions, business plans and operating budgets will need to be revised leading to a reduction in higher education services delivery and particularly to student support, which will have particularly negative consequences for students from regional, rural and remote Australia.

- The “*funding for bachelor level places will grow...*” referred to in the Consultation Paper relates to the level of funding. It makes no provision for growth in places. This halts all growth and limits aspiration, attainment and opportunity for any additional students to participate in higher education, particularly those in regional, rural and remote Australia. Even though the working age population may grow, there is no additional places. This, therefore limits opportunity and the benefit to both the economy and society from having a university qualification. This will in turn limit innovation and the skills necessary for future international competitiveness. These negative consequences of cutting funding for higher education will be particularly compounded in regional, rural and remote Australia where skill shortages already exist.
- The level of indexation proposed in the Consultation Paper is less than the movement in the CPI which is currently 1.9 percent (to September 2018 quarter). Both the CPI and the growth in working age population are less than the growth in salary and wage indices applicable to universities. Very clearly, each university will be increasingly worse-off under this level of indexation, exacerbated if there is no growth in places. This will mean university services and course offerings will need to be constrained in order to match the level of revenue with the services that are financially viable and can be sustainably provided. This issue will pose greater challenges to regional universities that have less capacity and opportunity to supplement revenues through international students.
- The design and mechanism for the contemplated performance based funding element of the CGS outlined in the Discussion Paper do not support the intentions for improvements in performance. The University supports fully a program to improve student experience, graduate outcomes and equity. However, the performance based funding element of the CGS contemplated in the Discussion Paper would result in a decline in funding per student which makes achievement of the outcomes proposed increasingly difficult for universities. Below we have proposed an alternative design and mechanism for addition of a performance based funding element to the CGS.

Charles Sturt University is particularly concerned that the performance based funding element of the CGS contemplated in the Discussion Paper would have unforeseen and negative impacts on regional, rural and remote students. As a regional university, we have seen that the era of the demand driven system has led to a drift of students from regional universities to metropolitan universities. Effectively, the position put forward in the Discussion Paper reintroduces caps and does so at a time where the University has lost load. Further compounding this challenge, the University has established a new campus at Port Macquarie, partly funded under a program for regional universities at the time of introduction of the demand driven system. The University has increased attainment in an underrepresented region and is still to fully pipeline student load arising from the decisions made at the time the initiative and investment was made. In summary, the Government’s continual changes to higher education programs and funding is greatly increasing uncertainty for universities and dramatically increasing institutional risk.

Charles Sturt University questions the merit of the performance based funding element of the CGS contemplated in the Discussion Paper. It applies to a level of funding that the University would see as representing a minimalistic level of cost indexation that will only partly go to support increasing costs, rather than a capacity to realistically improve performance measures for the benefit of all Australians, and particularly those in regional, rural and remote Australia that the University is focusing effort on one of Australia’s largest rural and regional universities, the planned policy and proposed program puts at risk the quality of our higher education service delivery in regional, rural and remote Australia and in turn the global reputation of our higher education sector more broadly.

Charles Sturt University requests that the Department review, revise and refresh the policy and program design set out in the *Performance-Based Funding for the Commonwealth Grant Scheme - Discussion Paper* to reflect the realities of higher education service delivery and in particular take into account the essential nature of the services provided by universities in regional, rural and remote Australia. I suggest the following framework for reviewing, revising and refreshing the proposed policies and contemplated programs set out in the Discussion Paper.

#### *Policy design and program development framework*

1. Policy amendments to the Commonwealth Grants Scheme reflect higher educational and broader national need to ensure effective investment of public funds rather than efficient spending of public funds.
2. That higher educational and regional, rural and remote need be defined and agreed in the National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy.
3. Program adjustments to the Commonwealth Grants Scheme be made with reference to long-term national and regional (as set out in the National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy) higher education outcomes, rather than short-term budgetary outputs.
4. Guarantee efficiency of public investment in higher education by committing to Commonwealth Grant Scheme stability that provides planning certainty and reduces operational risk for higher education providers and in particular universities servicing the needs of regional, rural and remote Australia.
5. Ensure effectiveness of public investment in higher education by providing additional funding through the Commonwealth Grants Scheme that encourages and fosters ongoing enhancement of output delivery, objective achievement and outcome realisation over time, by way of a performance-based scheme that incentivises continual improvement over time rather than achievement of predetermined milestones.

#### *Policy outcomes*

Beyond the national outcomes expected of government intervention in higher education, Charles Sturt University believes that higher education policy must address the:

- Gap in educational achievement between regional, rural and remote students and metropolitan students.
- Key barriers and challenges that impact on the educational outcomes of regional, rural and remote students, including aspiration, access and equity.
- Appropriateness and effectiveness of current modes of education delivered to these students, including the use of information and communications technology and the importance of face-to-face regional, rural and remote education provision.
- Effectiveness of public policies and programs that have been implemented to bridge the divide.
- Challenges and opportunities to help students successfully transition from school to further study, training and employment.
- Innovative approaches that support regional, rural and remote students to succeed in school and in their transition to further study, training and employment.

### *Program objectives*

Further, Charles Sturt University believes that higher education programs, including the Commonwealth Grants Scheme must achieve:

- Greater diversity in post-secondary study options for regional, rural and remote students.
- Strong financial, emotional and social support for regional, rural and remote students.
- Growth in tertiary education and training aspiration in regional, rural and remote communities.
- A level-playing-field in opportunity, by addressing regional, rural and remote disadvantage.
- An increase in people and jobs attracted to our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities.
- Success through implementation and monitoring in the context of a national strategy for regional, rural and remote education and training.

### *Incentivising continual improvement – a performance-based scheme*

In principle, Charles Sturt University supports government efforts aimed at incentivising higher education providers to continually improve their service delivery and the outcomes arising from the delivery of their services. Such an approach mirrors the University's ethos of 'Yindyamarra Winhanganha', which is a Wiradjuri phrase meaning, 'the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in'. It is the sentiment at the heart of the University's approach to education, and reflects the University's ethos 'for the public good'.

To this end, the University would welcome a performance-based scheme as one element of the Commonwealth Grant Scheme, but only where such an element was additional to base-line, recurrent Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding. I envisage that a performance-based scheme element of the Commonwealth Grant Scheme would:

1. Be designed and developed within the policy and program framework detailed above.
2. Include a combination of longer-term, multi-generational performance measures that ensure success of policy outcomes, together with medium-term and shorter-term, within budget-cycle performance measures that reflect achievement of program objectives.
3. Comprise customised and tailored long-term, medium-term and short-term cohort and course benchmarks, rather than overall institutional performance given the diversity and disparity across cohorts and courses in any one institution.
4. Be developed on a case-by-case basis by the Department and each institution in concert, reflecting the cohorts and courses of the institution based on a time and place matrix that brings together the long, medium and short term performance measures and cohort and course benchmarks discussed at 2 and 3 above, with the matrix being deployed to determine growth in each university's performance based funding amount from 2021 onwards and how a university's performance based funding amount from 2021 onwards would be treated.
5. Be based on a maximum institutional envelope, rather than a whole-of-sector pool to remove, if not eliminate, opportunities for perverse, short-term gaming of the scheme where institutions chase redistribution of funding of unsuccessful universities.

6. Include delay between performance data and the funding period at three levels; outputs by triennium (short-term benchmarks), objectives over rolling five-year periods (medium term benchmarks) and outcomes by decade (long-term benchmarks).
7. Not be legislated or regulated as performance would be measured by the Department on an institution-by-institution basis as part of the course of ordinary contract management.

Given the need for Australia to remain internationally competitive and to deliver economic growth and employment for our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities, it is vital that the policy and program contemplated in the Discussion Paper be amended to reflect the immediate and future needs of the sector within the Policy design and program development framework set out above.

We cannot afford to risk our economic future and jeopardise the potential of our students by undermining the capability and capacity of our higher education sector, particularly through short-term funding cuts and obsessing over costs efficiencies rather than focusing on educational effectiveness.

The proposed performance based scheme element of the CGS must be amended to reflect the need for the nation to have strong, sustainable and effective universities that deliver quality teaching and learning outcomes for students that make them industry ready as well as institutions that continue to drive excellence in research and innovation. In particular, the planned policy and proposed program contemplated in the Discussion Paper must be reshaped and redesigned to ensure post-secondary educational access and equity in regional, rural and remote Australia and to ensure that non-metropolitan disadvantage is not further entrenched by short term thinking and incremental, but deep funding cuts over time.

Finally, I would like to address three disturbing themes that emerge from the Department's Consultation Paper, that Charles Sturt University in particular objects to:

- i. Firstly, as an example of our concerns about the performance based mechanisms being proposed, Charles Sturt University questions the statistical basis of the judgement that institutions themselves are the most significant factor in attrition. It is not clear to us that the statistical analysis separated the effects of the enrolment profile of institutions from the success of their educational and support approaches. We believe that the Department needs to either provide a clearer explanation on this point or do more work to investigate the impact of related factors such as part-time study, SES and indigeneity within the policy design and program development framework set out above.
- ii. Secondly, use of the phrase "*ensuring quality in the higher education sector*". The use of the term "in" infers that the Department is referring to operational service delivery, or if you like service efficiency. Charles Sturt University does not believe that the allocation of CGS funding should be deployed to drive quality in the higher education sector in this sense, as the higher education sector is already extensively regulated for quality through the Higher Education Support Act (2003), the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency Act (2011), the Education Services for Overseas Students Act (2000) and each university's statute act, in Charles Sturt University's case, the Charles Sturt University Act (1989), together with a suite of other general legislation such as the Fair Work Act (2009). I ask that you remove this theme from the Consultation Paper and any subsequent policy and program documentation. The University does, however support using additional funding to base-line CGS appropriations to incentivise the quality "of" higher education, that is outcome effectiveness measured against long, medium and short term performance measures and benchmarks (as discussed above).
- iii. Thirdly, use of the term "*poor universities*". Charles Sturt University simply objects to the use of this phrase in Australian higher education public policy and program documentation. Within the legislative and regulatory environment detailed above, all Australian higher education institutions are continuously monitored and reviewed by government, and by industry and professional bodies to ensure that the high quality of courses, research, staff, pedagogy and services is maintained at or above international standards.



Further, Australian universities and the university sector as a whole consistently ranks highly in international rankings, such as the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. Creep of this term into Australian higher education policy and program lexicon would greatly damage brand Australia as it undermines confidence in the legislative and regulatory environment detailed above and would lead to a concomitant loss of market share in the internal education market. Again, I ask that you remove this theme from the Consultation Paper and any subsequent policy and program documentation.

I would be delighted to provide further information to the Department and would be available to provide evidence at any proposed consultations that that Department may undertake in relation to considering the policy positions put forward in the *Performance-Based Funding for the Commonwealth Grant Scheme - Discussion Paper* and subsequent program designs contemplated.

Yours sincerely

**Professor Andrew Vann**  
Vice-Chancellor



Australian Government  
Department of Education and Training

# Performance-based funding for the Commonwealth Grant Scheme

Discussion paper



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The document must be attributed as *Performance-Based Funding for the Commonwealth Grant Scheme – Discussion Paper*.

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# Performance-based funding scheme

## Introduction

The demand driven system has led to expanded opportunities for students, but it also resulted in a rapid escalation in public expenditure. Starting in 2009, the then government relaxed restrictions on the number of Commonwealth supported places (CSPs) it would fund. Consequently, from 2009 to 2017, annual taxpayer funding of public universities via the Commonwealth Grants Scheme (CGS) increased by 71 per cent, reaching \$7.0 billion. Total base funding for teaching and learning, including CGS subsidies and student contributions which are mainly deferred through the Government's HECS-HELP scheme, increased 73 per cent to \$11.9 billion. This rate of growth was not financially sustainable and did not significantly address large equity issues in attainment.

Funding in 2018 and 2019 was capped at 2017 levels to address this issue. From 2020, funding for bachelor-level places will grow in line with population growth in the 18-64-year-old age bracket, with universities being able to access this funding if they meet specified performance requirements.

Australians expect their taxpayer-funded public universities to deliver quality higher education. It is expected that universities continue to recruit from both regional and metropolitan areas, and from both low socio-economic status (SES) and high SES areas. The disparity in attainment between students from metropolitan areas and those who live in rural, regional and remote areas or come from areas of low SES disadvantage must be addressed. It is also expected that university students are satisfied with their experience, that they complete their qualifications, and that they are employed after they graduate. A performance-based funding scheme will ensure universities' objectives align with those of their students, the Government and the public.

The current system already offers universities some performance incentives. For example, retaining a student results in further CGS payments and student contributions. Additionally, the Government has responded to concerns regarding university admission practices, student retention and graduation rates through the introduction of new transparency guidelines for admissions, expansion of the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) website and public release of retention and completion data at the individual university level.

Nevertheless, the Government considers that the incentive for universities to focus on the outcomes that matter most to students should be strengthened. The Government recognises that the CGS, as a direct financial incentive, is the most important lever the Government has to drive university behaviour. The Government wants to ensure high performance at universities by linking funding growth to performance and equity requirements.

The Government recognises that performance measures can be challenging and will need to reflect a balance between a broad range of priorities and endeavours undertaken by universities.

Nevertheless, the CGS is the largest grant provided by the Commonwealth for higher education by a considerable margin, and in the light of the public policy interest in university equity, admissions, attrition, and student outcomes, it is appropriate to introduce a level of monetary accountability for universities' use of public funds in this area.

### **Purpose of this paper**

This discussion paper provides an introduction to the notion of performance-based funding and outlines the rationale driving the need for it in Australia's higher education system. This paper then presents the design principles that have been developed to ensure effective development of such a system. The legislative and technical basis for linking funding to performance targets is also discussed, as well as key implementation considerations. Finally, the paper presents key consultation questions for higher education stakeholders to consider and respond to. The Department of Education and Training regards responses to these questions and the discussion paper an important part of the consultation process.

## **Rationale**

### **Ensuring quality in the higher education sector**

The performance-based funding (PBF) scheme will promote quality in Australian higher education. The demand driven approach to funding higher education heralded a system that saw growth in the sector principally through quantity. By ensuring a link between funding growth and performance, the sector will now see that further growth occurs when quality is demonstrated.

Ideally, higher quality and efficient providers would be rewarded with greater market share, leading to an overall increase in the quality of the sector. However, the market for Commonwealth-supported higher education does not behave as a conventional market. For instance, a HELP scheme designed to ensure student fees do not lead to up-front barriers to study leads to low price sensitivity for students. With higher education considered an experience good (a good whose quality is difficult to assess in advance), students may not necessarily choose the best quality product for them, limiting the capacity for the market to see improvements in quality.

In such a distorted market, governments have intervened by regulating standards, student numbers, and fees. Furthermore, QILT has gone some way to addressing potential information asymmetries by providing some information regarding university performance. A stronger link between quality and funding will go further towards ensuring higher education achieves a high standard of quality across the entire sector and is affordable and sustainable for both students and taxpayers.

### **Incentivising improvement at poorer performing universities**

Overall, Australian universities compare well with their international peers, but at times this masks considerable differences between institutions. For instance, the Higher Education Standards Panel report into *Improving retention, completion and success in higher education* (2017) identifies the following three public universities as having significantly higher adjusted attrition rates in 2014 compared to 2005: University of Tasmania, Federation University of Australia, and Swinburne University of Technology. As the report notes, while the adjusted attrition rate for all Table A and B providers increased between 2005 and 2014 (from 15.04 per cent to 15.18 per cent), excluding these three universities from the calculation actually shows that attrition has reduced from 14.97 per cent to 13.63 per cent.

Nevertheless, university performance is more than just attrition and it is important to acknowledge that performance by universities can also vary across indicators. For instance, all three of these universities mentioned above actually have very good graduate employment outcomes: Federation University Australia's employment rate was 4th highest, Swinburne University of Technology's was 7th highest and University of Tasmania's rate was 12th highest (out of 41 universities). Additionally, Swinburne University of Technology exhibits the 8th highest student satisfaction (out of 41 universities), according to the QILT student experience survey.

It is important to ensure all universities achieve the level of performance in teaching and learning appropriate to the level of public investment they receive. Linking government funding to performance will encourage improvement for all universities across all performance measurements.

### **Ensuring efficient spending of public funding**

Australians expect their public universities to be managed efficiently, while providing value for money and minimising administrative costs. Universities must ensure they are demonstrably using the substantial taxpayer and private funds they receive in the most efficient and effective way possible and to maximise the public and private benefits of their funding for bachelor students.

Linking funding growth to performance will not only encourage universities to provide a better student experience and quality teaching, but also encourage universities to introduce new and more efficient initiatives to improve their performance, support student retention and boost graduate employment outcomes.



## Design

The Australian Government has previously operated performance funding for higher education teaching and learning. In 1991, *Performance Indicators in Higher Education* were published, with less than 10% of total government funds serving as incentive funding for outstanding performance. In 2003, the government announced the establishment of performance-based funding for Australia's higher education institutions through the *Learning and Teaching Performance Fund* (LTPF). The LTPF provided additional funding to the institutions that performed best on a number of measures including graduate outcomes, student experience, progression and attrition. A review (DEEWR 2008) found that the LTPF had increased university attention to learning and teaching, and encouraged the development of standardised tools to collect data on the student experience.

Following the 2008 *Review of Australian Higher Education* (Bradley Review), the government announced the cessation of the LTPF and the introduction of new performance funding arrangements. Performance measures to be used under the new *Reward Funding* scheme were to include participation and social inclusion, student experience and quality of learning outcomes. By the time of the closure of the scheme in 2014, participation and social inclusion were the sole determinants of Reward Funding. Over the period that Reward Funding operated equity performance measures such as the proportion of students from a low socio-economic background improved due to the added focus placed on them by the Government and institutions themselves.

Throughout both iterations of performance funding, there was intense debate concerning the appropriate measures to tie to university funding, and the extent to which measures should take into account the individual circumstances of universities. The Government acknowledges the importance of learning from previous experiences and working with the sector to develop satisfactory measures to inform the PBF scheme from 2020 onwards.

Since 2015, with the availability of the QILT website, and the recent publication of completion rates by university, institutional performance information as encapsulated by numerical measures has become more publicly accessible. Universities undertake their own internal studies of performance, and have advertised their success on QILT measures when results are favourable. Similarly, the Government is determined to take advantage of this kind of data to drive accountability and a high quality student experience.

### **International moves to implement performance-based funding**

Australia is not the only country to link public higher education funding to performance measures. A number of other jurisdictions operate such arrangements for their teaching and learning funds, both for government grants and student fees.

## Examples of performance-based funding in higher education

### ***The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (UK)***

*The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) was introduced to measure teaching quality and student outcomes across higher education in the UK in 2016. An independent review panel uses evidence from core measures, considering supplementary measures alongside evidence from provider submission to determine a provider's TEF rating: Bronze, Silver or Gold. Providers achieving a TEF rating will maintain their fees in line with inflation. In its first full year of assessment from 2017-2018, ratings are awarded at provider-level with no differential financial incentives. The final design of subject-level TEF for full implementation will be based on the second subject-level pilot and an independent review.*

### ***Performance-Linked Funding (New Zealand)***

*The New Zealand Government implemented performance-linked funding in 2012 to promote continuous improvement in educational performance. A maximum of 5% of a Student Achievement Component funded tertiary education organisation's (TEO) funding is contingent on the TEO's performance in the previous year(s) against the educational performance indicators (EPIs). The EPIs are weighted differently for the three grouped New Zealand Qualifications Framework levels: Level 1-3, Level 4-7 (non-degree), and Level 7-8. Those TEOs performing above the upper performance threshold will be allocated the full amount of reserved funding. For TEOs below the lower threshold, all of the reserved funding will be withheld. A portion of the reserved funding is withheld for TEOs whose performance scores fall between the upper and lower thresholds.*

### ***Performance-Based Funding Models (US)***

*To date, 32 states have a performance-based funding model in place based on performance indicators; many states are reconsidering their existing enrolment-based funding models to align with state goals and priorities (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). In Tennessee, under the current formula-driven funding model, after a base amount is set aside for operational support, 100% of state funding is allocated based on a university's weighted outcomes (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). Moreover, universities can obtain a 5.45% bonus if they perform well compared to the other universities on particular metrics set by the state. In Louisiana, the formula-based funding model comprise a performance component (15% of base appropriations) and a potential bonus (10% raise in tuition fee) for good performance (de Boer et al., 2015).*

## Design Principles

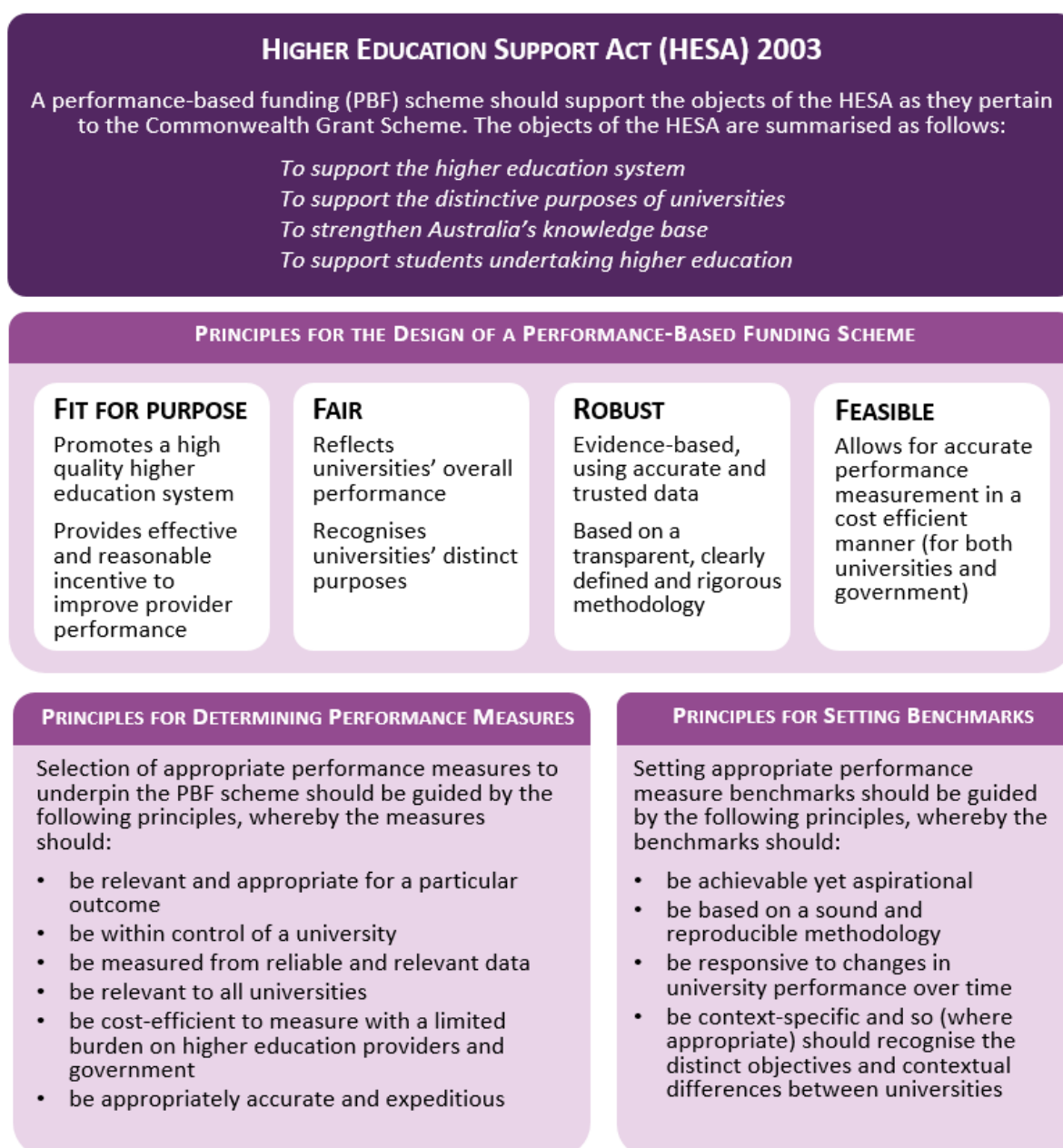
The objects of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) provide a framework for assessing what we want from Australia's higher education sector and how providers are performing. To this end, the PBF scheme must support the objects of the HESA (as they relate to the CGS).

The overall scheme design must not only support the objects of the HESA, but should also encourage universities to improve their performance and the quality of the whole sector. It should be fair and reflect the variety of providers (and provider missions) in the sector, should be well-formed and evidence-based, and should be cost-efficient (for both universities and the Australian Government).

The performance measures themselves should be appropriate and relevant to driving improved university performance, should be within control of universities, and should be straightforward to measure. The measure benchmarks that universities must achieve to receive performance funding should be achievable yet aspirational, should be set according to a sound methodology, and should take into account a university’s mission and unique student cohort.

A summary of the principles framework for the PBF scheme for the CGS is presented in the figure below.

**Figure 1 - Performance funding scheme principles framework**



## Process and Implementation

### Legislative and technical basis

The HESA provides the Minister for Education with authority to set a maximum basic grant amount (MBGA) in a provider’s funding agreement for non-designated courses of study (30-27(1)(a)(ii)). Each Table A provider’s funding agreement for 2018–20 provides that:

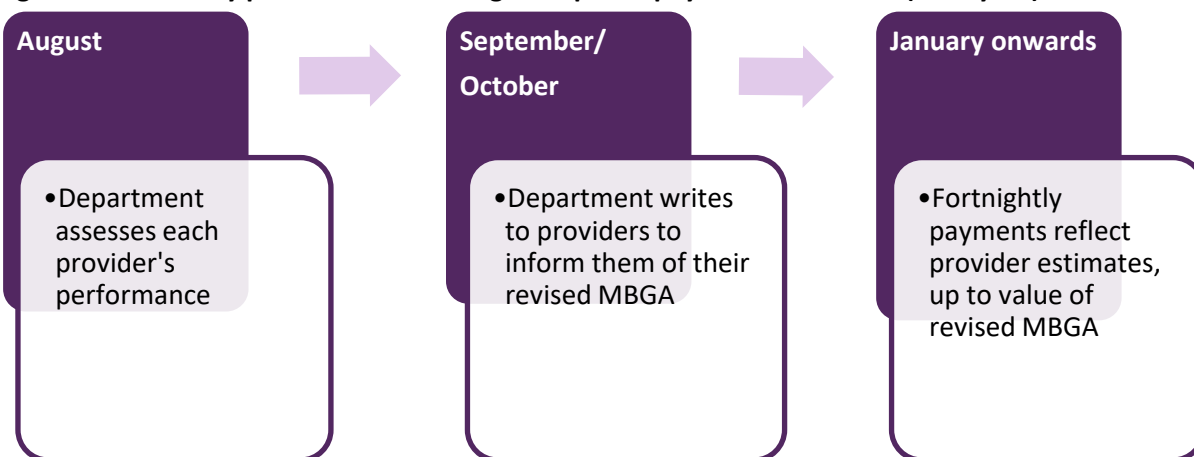
*For 2020, the maximum basic grant amount [is that specified for 2018]. Should the university meet its specified performance targets, the university will be advised in writing prior to the commencement of 2020 a revised maximum basic grant amount that will include an additional allocation based on projected national population growth in the 18 to 64 year old age bracket.*

The growth rate in the MBGA will be derived from the ABS population projections (ABS 3222.0) for 18 to 64 year olds, rounded to two decimal places. Over the decade to 2030, the ABS currently projects population growth of between 1.1 and 1.2 per cent per year in this age bracket. This currently equates to about \$70 million in additional funding per year across the sector.

### Payments and timing

A key principle of the PBF scheme is that the performance element for each university will be predictable and determined prior to the academic year in which it is paid. Assuming the university takes advantage of the additional allocation, the PBF element will form part of the university’s fortnightly CGS payments, up to the value of the revised MBGA.

**Figure 2 - University performance funding – Proposed payment timeframe (each year)**



## Consultation Questions

The Government intends to consult with the sector on the best possible design of the performance funding system. On the basis of the principles framework presented, the Government seeks comment on the following questions.

### 1. How should the PBF scheme be implemented?

Additional funding to universities in 2020 for meeting their performance targets will be added to their MBGA. However, decisions need to be made regarding the PBF amounts for universities from 2021 onwards.

#### **Consideration 1: how to *grow* a university's PBF amount from 2021**

The maximum amount of funding an institution receives is based on population growth of 18-64 year olds. While the national population growth rate for this age range could be applied to each university, another option would be to apply a more local or regional population growth for each university. For example, if population growth in Victoria is 2.2 per cent, compared to 1.0 per cent in Tasmania (based on ABS 2018 March data), universities in Victoria could be eligible for 2.2 times the funding an institution in Tasmania could possibly receive. Note that for such an approach, the total PBF amount could not exceed that defined by the national population growth rate (i.e. around \$70m each year).

Is a more regional-based population growth more appropriate?

#### **Consideration 2: how to *treat* a university's PBF amount from 2021**

While the PBF in 2020 will be added to a university's MBGA, in 2021 a consideration remains as to whether to continue to add subsequent years' PBF amount to a university's MBGA, or whether to keep it separate, such that the amount of funding at risk under the PBF scheme would grow each year (\$70m in 2021, \$140m in 2022, \$210m in 2023 etc.). Such a policy would provide greater flexibility for the system to respond to changes in demand in the future.

What are the benefits to each option?

## 2. What performance measures should the PBF scheme draw on?

Possible measures drawing on current performance-based funding models are shown in the table below.

**Table 1 - Potential performance measures**

Student experience	Graduate outcomes	Equity <sup>1</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First-year student attrition<sup>2</sup>/retention<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Student completion<sup>4</sup> within six years</li> <li>• Overall student satisfaction<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-time employment rate<sup>6</sup></li> <li>• Full-time further study<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation by students from low SES, regional/remote or Indigenous background</li> </ul>

See **Appendix 1** for further discussion of potential measures for the PBF scheme. While these measures may refer to a wider body of students than those studying in the non-designated bachelor places linked to PBF (including students studying sub-bachelor and postgraduate courses, and all those in medical places), the majority of these students will be in non-designated bachelor courses.

In addition to the measures outlined here, further measures of performance could become available in future as the Government pursues its accountability and transparency agenda. For example, it will be possible to obtain a more detailed view of HELP debts not expected to be repaid (DNER), including the level of DNER incurred at each university, and among different disciplines.

## 3. How should the PBF scheme be designed?

A basic approach to a PBF scheme would identify key performance measures and award PBF to those universities that meet benchmarks set for each measure. Examples of alternative options and variations on this approach are described below.

To reflect sector diversity and to account for the varied missions and student profiles of different universities a PBF scheme could include an element of choice by allowing universities to select measures. The concept of core (compulsory) measures and supplementary measures would strike a balance between maintaining comparability across universities, while allowing them to be rewarded for meeting measures that align with their mission.

<sup>1</sup> The assessment process of TEF (UK) looks at the extent to which a provider achieves positive outcomes for disadvantaged groups. The ethnicity dimension is used in PLF (NZ) to monitor the achievement of groups of interest to the sector and government

<sup>2</sup> Supplementary metric adopted in TEF (UK)

<sup>3</sup> Core EPI adopted in PLF (NZ), and performance component in Tennessee and Louisiana (US)

<sup>4</sup> Course/qualification completion rate is core Educational Performance Indicator adopted in PLF (NZ), and performance component in Tennessee and Louisiana (US)

<sup>5</sup> Core metric adopted in PLF (NZ)

<sup>6</sup> Employment and highly skilled employment are core metrics adopted in TEF (UK), and performance component in Louisiana (US)

<sup>7</sup> Core metric adopted in TEF (UK)

To drive improvements for specific equity groups, performance measures could be set that reward participation by equity group students (such as low SES students, students from regional or remote areas or Indigenous students). Alternatively, performance measures could be set specifically for equity group students, universities are rewarded for meeting attrition rate, student satisfaction or graduate outcome benchmarks for specific equity groups.

#### **4. How should performance measure benchmarks be set?**

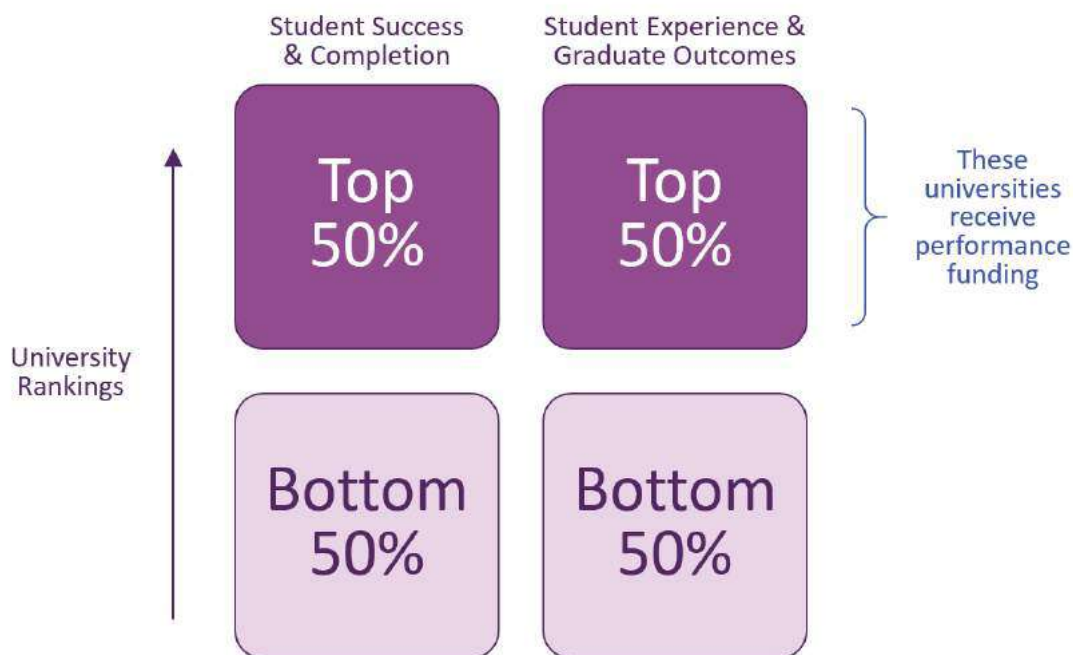
At its simplest level of operation, a PBF scheme would require universities to demonstrate a minimum acceptable level of performance every year across the selected measures in order to grow their CGS funding. The performance would be measured by statistics compiled by the Department of Education and Training and surveys conducted for the QILT website.

The need to take account of the diversity of student cohorts and institutional missions has been the most frequently expressed concern about the PBF scheme, particularly from universities with regional campuses and higher proportions of low SES students. The Government recognises that this need is genuine, and is interested in how a PBF scheme can fairly account for this diversity. For example, a university's attrition rate could be assessed against its own rolling average, rather than its peers. However, each university does not exist in a vacuum, but as part of a wider network of universities that often share characteristics. Taking no account of peer performance may not be a helpful way to encourage the sector-wide accountability the Government is seeking. Various methods for setting benchmarks can be found at **Appendix 2**.

Further, in the case of first-year attrition, the influence of student backgrounds on institutional performance may be overstated. A recent analysis of attrition rates found that, after controlling for student characteristics, institutions with low attrition still had below average rates, and institutions with high attrition still had above average rates. By far the largest influence on attrition was the institution attended. The analysis concluded, "controlling for student characteristics appears to make very little difference to the relative performance of institutions in terms of measured attrition rates" (Department of Education and Training 2017, 73). While this analysis does not capture all the factors that may influence attrition, including those that are difficult to measure (such as motivation and resilience), it does highlight that attrition relates more to which university a student goes to rather than the student's characteristics and, by extension, indicates that universities should have significant control over their student attrition rates.

Another approach could involve a performance measure ranking process, whereby universities are required to be ranked in the top 50 per cent for at least one of a range of performance measures. This approach could offer an element of choice for universities. For example, universities ranked in the top 50 per cent for measures of student experience and graduate outcomes and/or ranked in the top 50 per cent of rankings for student success and completion would be entitled to an increase in their MBGA. A summary of this approach is presented in the figure below.

**Figure 3 - PBF benchmarking through a ranking approach**



### 5. Should the PBF funding of unsuccessful universities be redistributed?

If universities do not meet their performance requirements, their funds at stake could be “pooled” and redistributed among successful universities. One simple way to achieve this would be to pro-rata any “pooled” funding amongst those institutions that meet their performance requirements.

To drive further improvements in performance it would also be possible to set “stretch” targets in addition to the minimum requirements in each domain. Universities that meet stretch targets would have part of the unallocated funds added to their MBGA proportionally.

For example, consider a system of four universities and a funding model linked solely to first-year attrition. A university that achieves an attrition rate equal to its average attrition rate over the past 10 years achieves the minimum standard, while a university that achieves its lowest attrition rate in the last 10 years achieves the stretch target (see **Example Scheme A at Appendix 2**). In the outcomes below, University A achieves the minimum but not the stretch, University B achieves neither, and Universities C and D achieve both.

**Table 2 – redistribution of PBF funding – illustrative example**

	Base PBF at stake	Successful at minimum standard?	Successful at stretch target?	Total additional MBGA allocated
University A	\$1,800,000	Yes	No	\$1,800,000
University B	\$2,000,000	No	No	N/A
University C	\$800,000	Yes	Yes	\$1,720,000
University D	\$950,000	Yes	Yes	\$2,030,000



Because University A is successful at the minimum standard, it receives growth in its MBGA equal to estimated 18 to 64 age population growth (but is not eligible for “pooled” funds). University B does not meet either requirement, so its potential \$2 million in MBGA growth is pooled for distribution to Universities C and D. The total base PBF allocation among the two successful stretch recipients is \$1.75 million (= \$800,000 plus \$950,000), shared on a pro rata basis (46/54) per cent between Universities C and D. University C receives 46 per cent of \$2 million (\$920,000) while University D receives 54 per cent (\$1,080,000). University C receives a total increase in its MBGA of \$1.72 million (= \$800,000 plus \$920,000) while University D receives an increase of \$2.03 million (= \$950,000 plus \$1,080,000).

A further option would be to add any of the unallocated performance funding to the funding available through the reallocation of designated places (see “Reallocation of Commonwealth supported places for enabling, sub-bachelor and postgraduate courses” paper). This would have the benefit of providing further opportunity for the expansion of offerings in these courses, which have not had the benefits of demand driven funding in recent years.

## **6. How much “lag” is acceptable between PBF data and the funding year?**

Because the performance allocation will be fully determined prior to the funding year, any data to determine that element must be available prior to that year as well. In practice, this means that the 2020 PBF scheme would largely be based on 2018 data (and earlier years for some retention measures), since that will be the most recent data available when determinations are made in the second half of 2019. This delay may influence which measures are most appropriate to include in the PBF scheme.

## **7. How should the PBF scheme be regulated?**

There are a number of options for regulating the PBF scheme. The Government could amend the *Commonwealth Grant Scheme Guidelines* to include the PBF requirements; as the *CGS Guidelines* are a disallowable instrument, Parliament would have oversight of the design of the performance formula. From 2021, the Government could also set out the performance requirements in each university’s CGS funding agreement or other agreements.

## **Submissions**

Please send submissions to the Department of Education and Training at [HEReform@education.gov.au](mailto:HEReform@education.gov.au). The closing date for submissions is 15 February 2019 at 5pm.

## Appendix 1 – Potential measures for performance-based funding

Measures	Availability	Background	Comments
<p><i>QILT</i>  <a href="http://www.qilt.edu.au">http://www.qilt.edu.au</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Experience Survey (SES)</li> <li>• Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ)</li> <li>• Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS), including Longitudinal (GOS-L)</li> <li>• Employer Satisfaction Survey (ESS)</li> </ul>	2-4 months after reference year	<p>The QILT surveys are conducted annually on behalf of the Department of Education and Training. Each includes a number of elements; for example, the SES surveys students on skills development, learner engagement, teaching quality, student support, learning resources, and overall educational experience.</p> <p>Student and graduate satisfaction with their university is generally high, but varies significantly by discipline and there is room for improvement. For example, graduates had a relatively low level of satisfaction with the quality of teaching they received (GOS 2017, 57).</p> <p>After a peak of 85.2 per cent in 2008, the full-time recent graduate employment rate declined to 68.1 per cent in 2014, and (using a different methodology) was only a little higher at 71.8 per cent in 2017 (GOS 2017, 6). Universities are not responsible for the broader economic conditions that affect graduate employment. Nevertheless, improving their job prospects is a primary reason why students study for a degree, and graduate jobs underpin the sustainability of Australia's HELP schemes.</p>	<p>QILT provides a variety of measures that could be used for PBF. The Government is interested in measures that indicate university teaching is providing what students require and expect, including the knowledge and skills they need to secure full-time employment. Metrics could include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction with teaching quality and overall quality of educational experience (SES, GOS)</li> <li>• Full-time employment rates (GOS/GOS-L)</li> <li>• Overall employer satisfaction with graduates (ESS)</li> </ul>
<p><i>Attrition, retention, success and completion</i>  <a href="https://www.education.gov.au/student-data">https://www.education.gov.au/student-data</a> (Section 15 in Selected Higher Education Statistics – 2017 Student Data)  <a href="https://www.education.gov.au/completion-rates-cohort-analyses">https://www.education.gov.au/completion-rates-cohort-analyses</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attrition: proportion of domestic students who commence a bachelor course in a reference year who do not return the following year.</li> </ul>	Success: 7-8 months after reference year	Following the introduction of the demand-driven system, universities chose to increase the number of students they admitted each year.	Universities that receive public funds and choose to admit students who incur a HECS-HELP debt have an obligation to ensure those students have the best chance of a positive outcome from their course.

Measures	Availability	Background	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retention: proportion of domestic students who commence a bachelor course in a reference year and continue the following year.</li> <li>Success: proportion of domestic bachelor units of study in a reference year that were passed.</li> <li>Completion: proportion of domestic bachelor students who commenced a degree up to nine years before the reference year and have completed.</li> </ul>	<p>Attrition and retention: 19-20 months after reference year</p> <p>Completion: varies</p>	<p>While first-year attrition generally remained stable in response to this behaviour, there were a number of universities that rapidly increased enrolments and maintained attrition rates well above the sector average. Between 2009 and 2016, seven universities had attrition rate increases of more than 30 per cent, and three universities had increases of more than 50 per cent.</p>	<p>As first year students are most at risk of leaving, attrition may be a focus for PBF. To ensure a fairer scheme, the metric would use adjusted attrition (i.e. taking into account the student's CHESSN to accommodate those who transferred).</p> <p>While universities have argued that students who leave and come back more than a year later should not be counted in attrition data, there is a strong correlation between first year attrition and completion. Further, from a public policy perspective it is preferable that students complete within a reasonable timeframe and maintain continuous contact with their institution.</p> <p>It is also preferable that funding linked to performance is provided as soon as possible after action. For example, rewarding universities on the basis of a 6 or 9 year completion rate would mean providing the funding 7 to 10 years after the students in that cohort are first enrolled.</p>
<p><i>Equity</i>  <a href="https://www.education.gov.au/student-data">https://www.education.gov.au/student-data</a> (Section 16 in Selected Higher Education Statistics – 2017 Student Data)</p>	<p>7-8 months after reference year</p>	<p>This category includes the representation of students from a low SES background, non-English speaking background, students with a disability, Indigenous students, and regional and remote students (as defined by ASGS).</p> <p>Students from these equity groups continue to be underrepresented in higher education compared to the general population.</p>	<p>The PBF formula could either use rates of representation among the wider student body, or ratios as compared to a suitable benchmark (see the Notes tab of the data spreadsheets).</p>

Measures	Availability	Background	Comments
<p><i>Student repayment of DNER</i>                      Institutional DNER rates                      Proportion of HELP debt repaid by a graduating cohort 5 years after graduation.</p>	<p>Total DNER for an institution would include repayments from all students that have attended that institution</p>	<p>With the Government moving towards linking Australian Tax Office, Australian Government Actuary and Department of Education and Training data, it is developing the capacity to examine the repayment characteristics of different cohorts of students. It may be possible to determine the repayment performance of graduates from different institutions and reward those institutions whose graduates best repay their HELP debts.</p>	<p>HELP debt currently stands at \$55 billion, with about a quarter of new debt never expected to be repaid. It is important that institutions consider student’s repayment potential to ensure HELP continues to be sustainable into the future.                      The database on which this indicator would be based is still being developed and the feasibility and reliability of indicators such as DNER by institution is still to be tested.                      Level of debt repayment is influenced by a number of factors, in particular the economy and labour market. This, in addition to the time between first enrolling students and measuring any performance, means that institutional performance may only play a minor role in determining repayment rates.                      The level of HELP repayments is strongly linked to the employment outcomes of graduates – those graduates who are employed in higher paying positions will have a better rate of repayment. Employment outcomes of graduates may therefore be a good proxy for repayment performance.</p>

## Appendix 2 – Example Formulae

The following examples show how the PBF formula could account for the variable circumstances of the student cohort at each university, using attrition as an example. One example compares a university against its own historical performance, while the others adjust the attrition rate to achieve a fairer comparison with other universities.

- A. Compare an institution’s attrition to its own performance over the past 10 years.
- B. Compare an institution’s attrition to a sector benchmark, with target cohorts weighted by the number of students (e.g. part-time, mature age, and low SES).
- C. Compare institutional “modified” attrition rates to actual rates, based on a regression analysis of each university’s rate in order to isolate the effect of its own performance from characteristics of its student cohort.

Examples are provided for sample universities. Attrition refers to domestic commencing bachelor adjusted attrition rates.

*The following are examples of how elements of the PBF requirements could operate from 2020. They are not intended to be formal proposals and their function is to assist the consultation process.*

### Example Scheme A: 10 Year Average

Under this example, an institution’s most recent first-year attrition rate would be compared against its attrition rates over the past 10 years. If the institution’s most recent adjusted attrition rate is:

Lower or equal to (to one decimal place)	the institution’s <i>lowest</i> attrition rate in the last 10 years	The institution satisfies	the minimum and stretch PBF requirements
	the institution’s <i>average</i> attrition rate over the past 10 years		the minimum PBF requirement only

If neither condition is satisfied, the institution does not meet the PBF attrition standard.

For assessing performance in the reference year 2016, **Institution A** has the following first-year adjusted attrition rates for the years 2007–16 (%):

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
18.5	17.9	19.5	20.2	22.4	24.7	19.4	20.1	19.9	20.0

In 2016, **Institution A**’s attrition rate was 20.0%. Over the ten years to 2016, the lowest attrition rate it achieved in any year was 17.9% in 2008. Since the 2016 result is higher than the 2008 result, the institution does not meet the stretch requirement. However, the institution’s average attrition over the past ten years was 20.26%. Because the 2016 result was lower than the average, the institution meets the minimum standard for funding growth.

### Example Scheme B: Weighted Average

Under this example, each institution’s adjusted attrition would be compared to the national average, with target cohorts weighted by the size of the cohort to allow a fairer comparison. If an institution’s overall weighted attrition is lower than the benchmark weighted average, the institution satisfies both the minimum and stretch PBF requirements. If the weighted attrition is equal (to one decimal place) to the national benchmark, the institution satisfies the minimum requirement only. If it is higher than the national benchmark, the institution does not meet the PBF attrition standard.

**Institution B** has 100 total students and the following attrition profile (assume students are allocated to single cohorts for this example):

Cohort	Actual attrition	Students	Weighted avg attrition	National avg attrition	Benchmark weighted avg
Low SES	25%	20	5%	21%	4.2%
External	30%	20	6%	40%	8%
Other	12%	60	7.2%	15%	9%
Overall		100	18.2%		21.2%

Weight each cohort’s actual attrition by the number of students in the cohort (e.g. for low SES,  $0.25 \times 0.2 = 0.05$ ) to achieve a weighted average, and sum to achieve an overall weighted average for **Institution B**. Then weight the national average attrition for each cohort by the number of students at **Institution B** (e.g. for low SES,  $0.21 \times 0.2 = 0.042$ ) and sum to achieve a benchmark weighted average.

**Institution B**’s weighted average attrition of 18.2% is lower than the benchmark of 21.2%, so **Institution B** satisfies both the minimum and stretch requirements.

### Example Scheme C: Regression Analysis

Under this example, the Department of Education and Training would perform regression analysis on each institution’s attrition rate to calculate a “modified” attrition rate, and compare the two. There are a number of ways that regression analysis can be performed, such as ordinary least squares (OLS) and logit estimation (see Department of Education and Training 2017, Appendix D).

Without regression, measuring the influence of institutions on attrition is confounded by student characteristics. For example, inspection of attrition rates shows many institutions with high attrition also tend to have a high proportion of external students. On the other hand, many institutions with lower attrition tend to have selective intakes of more academically able students. Regression techniques permit calculation of “modified” attrition rates for each institution to allow for the influence of student characteristics. For example, knowing external students have higher attrition, a benchmark is calculated for external attrition and the difference between the actual result and the benchmark can be identified as the institutional effect. This achieves the same conceptual adjustment as Example Scheme B but with more robust techniques. Note, however, that incorporating regression techniques adds considerably to the complexity of the scheme.

If the institution's actual attrition is lower than its "modified" rate, the institution is performing better than its cohort suggests, and satisfies both the minimum and stretch requirements for PBF. If its actual attrition is equal to its "modified" rate (to one decimal place), the institution satisfies the minimum requirement only. If its actual attrition is higher than its "modified" rate, the institution does not meet the minimum attrition standard for PBF.

**Institution C** has an actual attrition rate in 2016 of 16.0%. After regression analysis, **Institution C's** "modified" attrition rate is 17.2%. **Institution C** satisfies both the minimum and stretch requirements.

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## Recommendations

Charles Sturt University recommends the following with regard strengthening Australia's regional, rural and remote education system for better economic, social and environmental outcomes for students and our communities across Australia:

### 1.1 The gap in educational achievement between regional, rural and remote students and metropolitan students

***Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:***

- ***That student aspiration and capability built in and through schools be recognised as essential for regional, rural and remote educational outcomes and that governments directly invest in this area of comparative market failure (when compared to metropolitan outcomes).***
- ***That educational pathway options for regional, rural and remote students be greatly expanded to materially deliver access and equity gains for non-metropolitan Australians. Refer to recommendations provided by Charles Sturt University in submission to the Senate Education and Training Committee Inquiry of 7 July 2017 regarding the proposed Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment (A More Sustainable, Responsive and Transparent Higher Education System) Bill 2017).***
- ***The design, development and delivery by higher education training providers of a greater range of Bachelor programs that articulate from vocational education and training (VET) diplomas and Certificate 4s, including greater integration between levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF), including amendment of National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (NVR) and Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) regulations to enable nesting of VET and higher education qualifications and vice versa.***
- ***That Government, Schools and tertiary education continue to focus and investment in participation and success programs by government, schools and tertiary education and training providers, including continuation and expansion of HEPPP, particularly in regional, rural and remote Australia.***
- ***Again refer recommendations provided by Charles Sturt University in submission to the Senate Education and Training Committee Inquiry of 7 July 2017 regarding the proposed Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment (A More Sustainable, Responsive and Transparent Higher Education System) Bill 2017).***

### 1.2 The key barriers and challenges that impact on the educational outcomes of regional, rural and remote students, including aspirations and access issues

***Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:***

- ***That governments design and implement funded programs that support pathways for non-traditional students in regional, rural and remote Australia, building on the successful interventions and learnings of the University.***

- *That governments design and implement pathway programs that build on the regional retention results of the Graduate Outcomes Survey and the crucial role the University plays in developing and securing skills for the regional workforce, which in turn supports the viability of regional businesses and communities.*
- *That governments provide additional funding for the University to work with schools and their communities in promoting the benefits of, and developing aspiration for, higher education across non-metropolitan Australia. This work has been demonstrated to be a prime influence in the increasing number of university enrolments by regional, rural and remote students reported in the national data.*
- *That governments provide additional support and funding to enable higher education to provide role models (for example, university academics, graduates working in the community, and non-metropolitan focused teaching, learning and research institutes such as the proposed Murray Darling Medical School), noting that for universities to be able to continue to influence regional secondary students in this crucial area public funding will be required.*
- *That to provide an appropriate evidence base, government support and expand Charles Sturt University's pilot research into the barriers and challenges that impact on the educational outcomes of regional, rural and remote students (CIN Educational Consulting & Charles Sturt University, Office of Indigenous Affairs). This work would include aspirations and access issues to address this as a first step to enabling all regional, rural, remote school leaders, onsite access to contextually relevant, face-to-face professional learning and on-going support.*
- *That governments, collectively utilise individual rural and remote schools as the contextual centre for professional development for principals and school executives. Such work would include ongoing and professional support, delivered by experienced rural and remote education experts insitu.*
- *That State governments partner with universities, such as Charles Sturt, to prepare and accredit professional development for educators specifically for rural and remote school leadership in rural and remote communities throughout Australia, this would include pre-teaching appointment and on-going insitu professional development and mentoring.*
- *The Review team examine Charles Sturt University's early research findings referred to herein and conduct consultations within the pilot communities that this nascent work is being undertaken in, as well as request the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training to partner with the University to progress this research enquiry for tailored, contextualised and insitu professional development of rural and remote educators for improvement of student learning outcomes (CIN Educational Consulting & Charles Sturt University, Office of Indigenous Affairs).*

- 1.3 The appropriateness and effectiveness of current modes of education delivered to these students, including the use of information and communications technology and the importance of face to face regional, rural and remote education provision

*Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:*

- *That the Commonwealth Government, as a matter of national urgency, immediately review, refine and revise its information technology and communications policies, to ensure that all Australians, including those in regional, rural and remote Australia have world's-best access to the internet.*
- *To this end, the Commonwealth Government's national broadband network initiative be expanded to provide full fibre (or equivalent) to the home for all regional, rural and remote Australians, noting that failure to do so will consign non-metropolitan Australia to great education disadvantage and irrelevance in the digital century.*
- *That technology and communications related initiatives in the Commonwealth Government's Regions 2030 Unlocking Opportunity policy statement be revised to reflect the two recommendations above, and that following revision of the policy statement and our two recommendations above be funded in full and implemented as a matter of priority to ensure a viable future for regional, rural and remote Australia.*
- *That technology and communications related initiatives in the Commonwealth Government's Regions 2030 Unlocking Opportunity policy statement be revised to reflect the two recommendations above, and that follow revision the policy statement and our two recommendations above be funded in full and implemented as a matter of priority to ensure a viable future for regional, rural and remote Australia.*
- *That government devise new and effective ways of financing information technology and communications access, hardware and software for regional, rural and remote students and their family's that consider the often very short life spans of technology products, noting that current public funding models to do not take into account the useful life of technology, and therefore subject regional, rural and remote students to additional disadvantage over their metropolitan peers.*
- *Finally, Charles Sturt University supports the recommendations provided by Mr Craig Petersen, the Principal of Denison College of Secondary Education and Deputy President of the New South Wales Secondary Principal's Council, in his submission to the Independent Review of Regional, Rural and Remote Education.*

*Also, refer to recommendations in Section 1.5 below.*

1.4 The effectiveness of public policies and programs that have been implemented to bridge the divide

*Charles Sturt University supports the recommendations provided by Mr Craig Petersen, the Principal of Denison College of Secondary Education and Deputy President of the New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council, in his submission to the Independent Review of Regional, Rural and Remote Education.*

*Charles Sturt University has made a number of other recommendations in Section 4.5, that we believe would strengthen effectiveness of public policies and programs that have been implemented to bridge the divide between regional, rural and remote education outcomes and those of metropolitan Australia.*

1.5 The gaps and opportunities to help students successfully transition from school to further study, training and employment

*Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:*

1. *Development of complementary investment in soft resources that leverage the use of existing hard resource facilities in regional Australia.*
2. *An agile funding model that removes barriers to cross-sector collaboration and rewards engagement with community and industry. In particular, a dedicated strategy to enable education providers to develop seamless transitions between Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education providers (Acer: [credit based pathways in tertiary education](#)) (NCVER; a half-open door: pathways for VET award holders into Australian universities 2013), including:
  - *a continuing focus on implementing the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) operational guidelines for pathways, in particular working towards guaranteed entry into Higher Education courses for VET award holders;*
  - *combined educational leadership from all three sectors, with dedicated, senior roles that hold responsibility for collaboration and education pathways;*
  - *investment in systems to monitor student progress and achievements within and between all three sectors (enabled through the Universal Student Identifier (USI)); and,*
  - *accessible, well-structured information about pathway options for students and key influencers (including parents and careers counsellors).**
3. *A model that has a core function of maximising the use of technology and capacity building around digital service delivery in a way that addresses disparities in regional capacity and ability (Morgan, 2016) and addresses substantial growth in regional to metropolitan migration for Higher Education*

*study (a 75 per cent increase between 2008 – 2014) (National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education; Regional Student Participation and Migration 2017).*

- 4. Education pathways that address existing and emerging workforce needs, customised for regional communities. The pathways should have a focus on digital ability, critical thinking and entrepreneurship and critically, expose students to industry and vice versa.*
- 5. Incentives for earlier and deeper collaboration between both the schools and VET sectors, and the Higher Education sector. This would include more opportunities for schools and VET students (and key influencers such as parents) to engage with their local education providers both within the school, VET campus and on Higher Education campuses.*
- 6. More coordination around pathway promotions within schools, between Higher Education and Vocational education providers, with the intent of reducing duplication and triplication activities (and to ensure that no school misses out).*
- 7. A continuing focus on the professional development of community and industry leaders within regional Australia, alongside and in collaboration with educational leaders. This professional development should focus on building an advanced capability for collaboration in complex and changing environments, managing ambiguity and stakeholder engagement.*
- 8. A core requirement, for digital ability and capacity be raised. Digital inclusion research indicates that regional Australians are 20 per cent less likely to use online technologies to manage their work and personal lives than the national average (Roy Morgan, Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2016). With technological impacts cited as one of five disruptive megatrends for the next 10 years by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC: [what is a megatrend and why do they matter?](#)), a dedicated focus will help to bridge this gap.*
- 9. A broader definition of information and communications technology (ICT) investment within education sectors. While Professor Halsey's Discussion Paper touches on the need for innovation in the use of ICT (Pages 33 & 34), it does not address regional disparities associated with community ability in the use of ICT. Specific investment is required to ensure that once technologies are accessible, teachers and educational leaders can make the best use of this technology. This would include investment in best practice use of videoconferencing and collaboration between networks of connected education providers.*
- 10. A continued focus on providing opportunities for students to access education and training in the regional areas that they reside. Students who study in regional areas tend to remain in regional areas after graduation and provide a ready supply of professionals to fill critical regional roles (Acer: [Credit based pathway in tertiary education](#)).*

1.6 **Innovative approaches that support regional, rural and remote students to succeed in school and in their transition to further study, training and employment**

*Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:*

- *that the Aspiration and Outreach agenda be continued;*
- *that university school zones for partnership activity between universities be established to allow for greater collaboration between institutions;*
- *ongoing targeted support tailored to address access, participation and success issues faced by Indigenous peoples who reside in regional, rural and remote areas; and,*
- *strategies to enhance Indigenous participation should be designed in conjunction with local communities and embrace a whole of university approach.*

*Furthermore, in this respect, Charles Sturt University recommends ongoing targeted support tailored to address access, participation and success issues faced by Indigenous peoples who reside in regional, rural and remote areas.*

*We also recommend that strategies used should be designed in conjunction with local communities and embrace a whole of university approach. That is, success in this area will not be enhanced by central, standardised approaches. For example, Charles Sturt University's Strong Moves mentoring program, links to Future Moves and to the Indigenous Student Centres at the University. This mentoring program was built in consultation with parents and students from our local communities and provides a seamless relationship for school students with staff and students in the University.*

1.7 **Charles Sturt University - Learnings from regional New South Wales and Victoria and potential intervention strategies to boost regional, rural and remote educational outcomes.**

*Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:*

- *that the Aspiration and Outreach agenda be continued;*
- *the proposed budget reforms that remove enabling funding to be rejected;*
- *that consideration is given to the need for additional strategies to effectively support and engage regional rural and remote students who study by distance education; and,*
- *that three-year funding streams for outreach funding are established.*

*Furthermore, Charles Sturt University supports a minimum three-year HEPPP funding stream to encourage schools' continued partnerships and participation, as per the August 2017 EPHEA statement:*

***This three-year funding stream would mean that equity practitioners can coordinate widening participation and retention programs, resources and partnerships more effectively and sustainably.***

***(EPHEA 2017, Information to Government Representatives regarding the Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment [A More Sustainable, Responsive and Transparent Higher Education System] Bill 2017.)***

***We also recommend that the Independent Review into Regional Rural and Remote Education examine the early research findings from work currently underway, including that of Charles Sturt University. In particular, we recommend that the Review consult face-to-face with the pilot schools and communities and drive a partnership with the University to progress the pilot and research enquiry.***

***Finally, we recommend that the Review team consider the early trends emerging from this research and partner with Charles Sturt University for further development of the model.***



1 February 2019

The Hon Dan Tehan MP  
Minister for Education  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

### **NATIONAL REGIONAL, RURAL AND REMOTE EDUCATION STRATEGY**

Thank you for your letter dated 12 November 2018 regarding the Australian Government's proposal to develop a National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy (Attachment 1).

Education is the primary driver of economic growth and it provides the opportunity for our people living and working in non-metropolitan Australia to create wealth, employment, and contribute to the nation's future prosperity. Development and implementation of a Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy would greatly strengthen Australia's regional, rural and remote education system for better economic, social and environmental outcomes in communities across non-metropolitan Australia. Our regions are vital contributors to national success and we must ensure that all Australians no matter where they live or work, are provided with educational opportunity.

An effective education strategy would need to focus on individual aspiration, ease of access, personal preparedness, equity assurance and student success. The strategy would need to encompass policy interventions and program investments that increase post-secondary study options, strengthen financial, emotional and social support, boost tertiary education and training aspiration, address disadvantage, attract people and jobs to our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities and provides for a multi-generational commitment to implementation and monitoring.

Implementation of a Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy must include programs that:

- Overcome distance and isolation through infrastructure investment.
- Ensure provider and qualification choice in community.
- Enable face-to-face student-academic interaction, as well as local peer-to-peer interaction and mentoring.
- Subsidise rural and remote student travel and accommodation expenses.
- Require breadth and depth in bridging, enabling and pathway programs at no costs to rural and remote students (for example fee-free TAFE study in Victoria).
- Grants scholarships to students for study at regional university campuses to maintain people in and attract people to regional, rural and remote Australia.
- Reviews, refreshes and refines the HEPP taking into account regional diversity.

- Encourages whole-of-community stakeholder ownership of improved study outcomes through cooperation and collaboration.
- Provides regional graduate employment incentives for businesses and individuals.
- Informs, through an awareness and promotion campaign targeted at prospective students, the value of study to regional, rural and remote communities and the value of studying at a regional university campus.
- Invests in productivity enhancing and participation boosting initiatives for regional, rural and remote workforce development.
- Funds in-situ research aimed at addressing challenges and capturing opportunities unique to regional, rural and remote Australia.
- Promotes far-reaching national awareness of the benefits of studying, living and working in non-metropolitan Australia.

As a first step in the development and implementation of the Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy, I congratulate you on your announcement of a new package of regional higher education initiatives that increase the Australian Government's investment in rural and regional Australia to provision of more choice and access to regional students pursuing higher education.

Although we remain concerned about the financial impact on regional universities from some budget decisions in recent years, Charles Sturt University welcomes your commitment to \$134.8 million in funding over four years for additional measures that build on the Government's response to the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education (the Halsey Review), the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarship Scheme and the Regional Study Hubs Initiative. The University recognises that your announcement brings the Government's total commitment to regional higher education to almost \$400 million over five years.

Charles Sturt University was pleased to provide a submission to the Halsey Review (refer, [http://www.csu.edu.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/3050872/CSU\\_Submission\\_Regional-Rural-Remote-Education.pdf](http://www.csu.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/3050872/CSU_Submission_Regional-Rural-Remote-Education.pdf)). Our submission recognised that effective regional, rural and remote education strategy must be customised and tailored to the needs of individuals, local employers and specific economies given the breadth and depth of regional diversity across Australia.

The University's submission provided detailed commentary and opinion, based on an extensive review of Australian and international literature, as well as our own comprehensive research across regional, rural and remote south-eastern Australia regarding education in non-metropolitan Australia. The University's submission addressed:

- the gap in educational achievement between regional, rural and remote students and metropolitan students;
- the key barriers and challenges that impact on the educational outcomes of regional, rural and remote students, including aspiration, access and equity;
- the appropriateness and effectiveness of current modes of education delivered to these students, including the use of information and communications technology and the importance of face-to-face regional, rural and remote education provision;
- the effectiveness of public policies and programs that have been implemented to bridge the divide;

- the challenges and opportunities to help students successfully transition from school to further study, training and employment; and,
- innovative approaches that support regional, rural and remote students to succeed in school and in their transition to further study, training and employment.

Further, Charles Sturt University's submission to the Halsey Review provided an extensive and detailed range of recommendations that the University believes would greatly strengthen Australia's regional, rural and remote education system for better economic, social and environmental outcomes for students and our communities across New South Wales and Victoria, as well as the rest of non-metropolitan Australia. An extract of which is provided for your reference at Attachment 2.

I believe that it is critical that governments, Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local invest in the future of our regions. Our regions are vital contributors to our national success and we must ensure that all Australians no matter where they live or work, have access to educational opportunities.

Education is a driver of economic growth and it provides the opportunity for our people living and working in non-metropolitan Australia to create wealth, employment, and contribute to the nation's future prosperity. To this end, the University's recommendations contained in our submission to the Halsey Review were designed to ensure that Australia has the ability to build a strong and sustainable education sector that delivers access and equity.

Charles Sturt University welcomes the Australian Government's response to the Halsey Review (refer, [https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/australian\\_government\\_response\\_accessible\\_30\\_may.pdf](https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/australian_government_response_accessible_30_may.pdf)). In particular, the University welcomes your proposal to develop a National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy that builds on the Government's response to the Halsey Review.

The University supports the establishment of the Expert Regional Education Advisory Group to drive the Strategy and advise the Government on the ongoing education and training needs of regional communities. The University is keen to work with the Committee on the preparation of the National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Report to Government which would include priority recommendations for action, including advice on the merits of establishing a Rural Education Commissioner to oversee implementation of the strategy.

As part of the Expert Advisory Group's remit the University would like to work with the Department-based secretariat to ensure engagement in the development of the Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy. To this end and building on the University's submission to the Halsey Review, we have put forward ideas on issues impacting education in regional Australia, and most importantly what strategies we believe could be collectively developed across the Commonwealth and in partnership with States, Territories, Local Government and tertiary education and training providers to make a lasting and real difference for regional, rural and remote communities.

The University's ideas and strategies have been framed within the context set-out in the *National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy Framing Paper* prepared by the Regional Education Expert Advisory Group in December 2018 (Attachment 3).

Charles Sturt University supports the development and implementation of a National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy. The University would like to see development and implementation of a strategy which comprises policy interventions and program investments that:

1. Increase post-secondary study options for regional, rural and remote (RRR) students.
2. Strengthen financial, emotional and social support for RRR students.

3. Boost tertiary education and training aspiration in RRR communities.
4. Address RRR disadvantage.
5. Attract people and jobs to our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities.
6. Implement and monitor a national strategy for RRR education and training.

### ***Increasing post-secondary study options***

*“Government intervention and investment will need to build on the current range of innovative models for delivering tertiary education outside our major cities, to support a range of models and pathways that meet the diverse needs of RRR communities and industries.*

*A sparse continent and population that primarily clusters in cities creates challenges in the delivery of tertiary education across Australia. RRR areas often do not have the population density to sustain extensive tertiary options. The lack of access to study options contributes to declining participation rates in both university and higher-level vocational study as regions become more remote.*

*Compared to those in very remote areas, people living in major cities are four times as likely to participate in university, and twice as likely to participate in higher-level vocational training. In essence, regional universities and regional students need incentives to level the playing field of the demand driven system, by retaining regional students at regional universities and attracting those from urban areas to the regions – both on campus and online. This will reinforce regional universities as anchor institutions and reduce some of the population pressure on metro areas.”*

\* From Page 6, *National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy Framing Paper* Regional Education Expert Advisory Group. Department of Education & Training, Australian Government. December 2018.

Charles Sturt University supports the analysis of the Regional Education Expert Advisory Group and findings regarding post-secondary study options available in our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities. Increasing post-secondary study options throughout non-metropolitan Australia will require long-term government intervention and investment to correct education and training market failure. Interventions and investments would need to be designed within a national framework for RRR education and training that includes the following policy outcomes:

- i. Builds on the current range of innovative models for delivering tertiary education outside our major cities.
- ii. Provides a range of pathways that meet the diverse needs of RRR communities and industries.
- iii. Addresses market failure in RRR areas that do not have the population density to sustain extensive tertiary options.
- iv. Increases access to study options that boost participation rates in both university and higher-level vocational study and, in turn reduces marginalisation of RRR communities.
- v. Creates incentives for regional universities and RRR students that level the playing field of the demand driven system, by retaining regional students at regional universities and attracting those from metropolitan areas to the regions.

- vi. Reinforces regional universities as anchor institutions and reduces some of the population pressure on metropolitan areas.

Drawing on this framework, Charles Sturt University proposes a suite of coordinated and complementary programs for implementation under a national strategy for RRR education and training.

Delivering on the objectives and outputs in each the University's suggested programs would contribute to achieving the desired policy outcomes of a national framework for RRR education and training. The University's proposed programs include:

- Options for further study in RRR areas:
  - Access to study customised and tailored to local need, for example fund local government or community organisations to operate student learning spaces in communities with populations between 250 and 500 and study centres in towns of 500 to 2,500 people, fund service providers to operate study hubs in regional centres of 2,500 to 7,500 people and fund RTOs and HEPs to operate fit-for-purpose sites in regional cities of 7,500 to 20,000 and in cities of more than 20,000 people ensure university campus presence.
  - Ensure learning spaces, study centres, study hubs and fit-for-purpose sites are AQF and provider neutral.
  - In support of study access customised and tailored to local need, provide financial incentives for leveraging existing and recycling disused infrastructure, for example LGA offices, sports clubs, municipal libraries, state schools etc.
  - Equip all learning spaces, study centres, study hubs and fit-for-purpose sites with 1Gps broadband, computer hardware and software and video-conferencing facilities – for distance education and on-line study (where connection to home is impractical).
  - Fund visiting student support officers and academic skills counsellors based on student load at learning spaces, study centres, study hubs, fit-for-purpose and sites.
  - Subsidise travel and short-term accommodation costs for students from populations of less than 2,500 that need to attend regional university campuses and/or metropolitan university campuses for intensives.
  - Development and delivery of no-fee secondary subject bridging programs for school students that were restricted in their subject choice due to attendance at small schools, enabled by the States and Territories through COAG given their responsibilities for K-12 education.
  - Provide access to the HELP for living away from home expenses of RRR students studying in regional cities and/or metropolitan areas.
  - Provide scholarships for metropolitan students to study at regional university campuses as spare capacity exits at most regional universities that can be rapidly scaled-up, with scholarships repayable if graduates return to metropolitan Australian within three years of graduation.

- Potential for universities, vocational training providers and other service providers to better work together in RRR areas, including opportunities to expand service offerings and better support articulation between VET and higher education:
  - Provide spaces, centres and hubs with one-off set-up grant for communications (broadband, including satellite access, hardware equipment, video-conference software, and installation and commissioning costs etc.) that links direct (potentially piggy-backing off) to the existing communications infrastructure of universities and vocational training providers.
  - Provider financial incentives for post-secondary education and training providers to work together for student, business and community outcomes at the learning spaces, study centres, study hubs and fit-for-purpose sites, for example by providing a 10 per cent regional loading to CSP.
  - Streamlined articulation from VET diploma to higher education degree pathways, including recognition of qualifications and pathways in the AQF (between VET and higher education, as already recognised VET to VET and higher education qualification to qualification).

### **Strengthening financial, emotional and social support**

*"There is substantial mobility between our cities and RRR areas, which has major economic and social benefits for Australia. However, moving can involve significant costs and other pressures for students and their families. To pursue wider opportunities in education, students often need to relocate. In 2014, 57 per cent of regional students relocated for university studies compared to 27 per cent of metropolitan students.*

*The cost of tertiary education and expenses associated with living away from home are significant barriers to participation and completion for RRR students. For students who relocate to attend university, the associated living costs can double the cost of a higher education degree. These costs affect student aspirations. Regional students who are from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds are twice as likely to perceive the cost of university fees as prohibitive.*

*For those students who are able to relocate, relocating and living away from home results in financial and emotional challenges. Students from regional backgrounds are almost twice as likely as those from metropolitan backgrounds to report financial stress due to the associated costs of relocating (44 per cent compared to 24 per cent) even when relocating to a regional university."*

\* From Page 7, *National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy Framing Paper* Regional Education Expert Advisory Group. Department of Education & Training, Australian Government. December 2018.

Charles Sturt University supports the analysis of the Regional Education Expert Advisory Group and findings regarding financial, emotional and social support for students in our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities. Improving financial, emotional and social support for students from non-metropolitan Australia will require long-term government intervention and investment to correct education and training market failure. Interventions and investments would need to be designed within a national framework for RRR education and training that includes the following policy outcomes:

- i. Supports students that need to relocate to pursue education and training opportunities, particularly in specialist disciplines and fields.

- ii. Enhances student choice by supporting mobility between our cities and RRR areas.
- iii. Addresses costs and other pressures, including emotional and academic challenges that RRR students and their families encounter that metropolitan students do not have to contend with.
- iv. Compensates for expenses associated with living away from home to reduce, if not eliminate living away from home expenses as a barrier to participation and completion for RRR students.
- v. Closes the gap between RRR and metropolitan students regarding total cost of study incurred, even when relocating to a regional university.
- vi. Counters that people of low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds are twice as likely to perceive the cost of university fees as prohibitive.

Drawing on this framework, Charles Sturt University proposes a suite of coordinated and complementary programs for implementation under a national strategy for RRR education and training. Delivering on the objectives and outputs in each the University's suggested programs would contribute to achieving the desired policy outcomes of a national framework for RRR education and training. The University's proposed programs include:

- Financial support for students from RRR backgrounds, including those who choose to relocate:
  - Ensure equality of opportunity by providing for relocation and living away from home expenses for RRR students attending university and/or TAFE in regional cities and metropolitan areas by way of mobility grants, with a weighting towards study at a regional campus of a university or TAFE where non-metropolitan institutions offer courses comparable with universities in our major cities (see below), further a portion of this funding should be upfront on offer of place, to ensure the perception of and reality of cost is removed as a barrier to post-secondary study, particularly in first in family circumstances and for students from communities with very low post-secondary education participation and completion metrics.
  - Where a student is relocating to study at a regional university campus, whether from RRR Australia or a metropolitan centre, provide an on-campus residential grant equivalent to the one years' median fee of on-campus accommodation at that campus.
  - Review and refine AusStudy in concert with above, including incentive weighting to campuses of universities in regional Australia where same or comparative courses are available at both regional and metropolitan universities (this enhancement would encourage people from RRR Australia to stay in non-metropolitan Australia to study and leverage the study in region/work in region to encourage population and economic growth in RRR Australia over time.
  - Restrict funding for relocation and living away from home expenses for RRR students to students living more than 75km from a campus of a regional university so as not to incentivise relocation of students from regional cities that are already well serviced by education and training providers (unless chosen course is not offered at the student's local university campus).

- Provide HELP discounts and increased income thresholds for repayment to any Australian student studying at a regional university campus.
- Provide direct subsidy for development and maintenance of high quality on-campus student accommodation at university campuses in regional cities.
- Provide whole and/or part fee scholarships for RRR students studying at regional campuses of universities that are studying in fields of regional workforce priority and/or from challenged cohorts.
- Support to help students from RRR backgrounds complete their tertiary study:
  - Expansion of HEPP support for RRR students, particularly those attending learning spaces, study centres, study hubs and fit-for-purpose sites, with HEPP funding per student based on geographic isolation and challenged cohort type.
  - Peer to peer and student mentor programs at learning spaces, study centres, study hubs and fit-for-purpose sites.
  - Group study and social interaction opportunities at learning spaces, study centres, study hubs and fit-for-purpose sites.
  - Leverage broadband and video-conference capability at learning spaces, study centres, study hubs and fit-for-purpose sites to ensure valued and on-going connectivity with student and academic communities at regional city and metropolitan area campuses.
- Ensure RRR students feel like they belong on their university campus of study:
  - Expansion of HEPP support for RRR students, particularly addressing emotional and social support, including opportunities to meet, greet and interact with student peers and academic staff to build social networks and capital.
  - Social support programs for students that have relocated to the regional campus of universities based on the many successful programs at the large metropolitan university for inclusion of international students.
  - Expanding the education and training provider-professional bodies interactions and relationships to courses and workforces that do not require professional accreditation.
  - Investing in programs that connect undergraduates with potential employers, both during study and post-study.
  - Cash bonuses to regional employers and students who studied at a regional campus of a university on entering into a full-time permanent employment agreement paid on completion of probation period and at 12-month anniversary of completion of probation period (based on the apprenticeship and long-term unemployed incentives).

### ***Boosting tertiary education and training aspiration***

*“Students from RRR areas tend to have different education aspirations. For example, students from regional backgrounds are 10 per cent less likely to have plans to attend university than metropolitan students, after controlling for SES.*”



*Students from RRR areas are more likely to choose VET study options. In some cases, differences in aspirations reflect positive choices to pursue employment opportunities in particular occupations or industries relevant to the needs of their local communities.*

*In other cases, however, it may reflect negative student perceptions of their prospects of getting into a university or successfully completing a university degree. One reason may be less exposure to role models who have obtained higher-level qualifications.*

*The proportion of people in major cities holding a university degree is approximately double that in regional areas, and triple that of people in remote areas. Furthermore, there is a tendency for regional communities to focus more on helping young people find employment rather than considering higher education as a pathway.”*

\* From Page 8, *National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy Framing Paper* Regional Education Expert Advisory Group. Department of Education & Training, Australian Government. December 2018.

Charles Sturt University supports the analysis of the Regional Education Expert Advisory Group and findings regarding tertiary education and training aspiration in our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities. Growing tertiary education and training aspiration throughout non-metropolitan Australia will require long-term government intervention and investment to correct education and training market failure. Interventions and investments would need to be designed within a national framework for RRR education and training that includes the following policy outcomes:

- i. Ensures that students from RRR backgrounds have plans to attend university comparable to their metropolitan counterparts, after controlling for SES.
- ii. Provides balance in RRR student choice between VET study and higher education options.
- iii. Corrects differences in aspiration between RRR and metropolitan student choice regarding study or employment on completing secondary school, particularly where workforce-pull in occupations or industries in local communities is very strong.
- iv. Addresses the often-negative perception of RRR students regarding their prospects, including little, if any exposure to role models who have obtained higher-level qualifications.
- v. Closes the participation and completion gap between RRR and metropolitan students in post-secondary study.
- vi. Encourages public policy and program balance between helping young people find short-term employment and supporting them to pursue higher education as a long-term career pathway.

Drawing on this framework, Charles Sturt University proposes a suite of coordinated and complementary programs for implementation under a national strategy for RRR education and training. Delivering on the objectives and outputs in each the University's suggested programs would contribute to achieving the desired policy outcomes of a national framework for RRR education and training. The University's proposed programs include:

- Actions that would help raise aspiration and support informed career choice for students from RRR backgrounds:

- Local community-based awareness programs, targeted not only at students, but also their parents (particularly parents of future first in family higher education students).
- Integration of university and TAFE aspirational programs across regions, modelled on the joint venture partnership for delivery of HEPP by universities in Queensland (to reduce the massive duplication by universities in regional New South Wales).
- Inclusion of further study aspirational elements in primary and secondary school, targeted at participation in tertiary education and training (while building pathways from VET to higher education, see earlier program suggestions).
- Place focus of aspiration programs for school students and mature age students from RRR areas on work, career and life outcomes – not study per se as a mechanism for demystifying higher education.
- Review, revise and refine the HEPP program, including a comprehensive analysis of learnings from the last decade of implementation, including assessment of differing resource requirements across RRR Australia, fund and implement the findings of the review to ensure “no-disadvantage” for any student in RRR Australia regardless of home location and SES cohort across generational timeframe to ensure genuine change with Regional, Rural and Remote Education Commissioner (see below) to monitor and report on performance as well as recommend improvements to the program over time.
- HEPP funding to take into account the expense incurred by providers as a result of the vast distances of reaching and low populations densities of rural towns and remote communities.
- A long-term, broad, behavioural change promotional campaign about the value of advanced VET study and higher education to people from RRR areas, based on health, road safety and anti-smoking models.

### **Addressing disadvantage**

*“Other characteristics that are associated with lower access and attainment at a tertiary level compound the effects of regional disadvantage. Regional students are more likely to be from low SES households, from Indigenous backgrounds, older, studying part time, and/or the first in their family to attend university.*

*Each of these characteristics presents its own challenges, but they combine to make studying more difficult for students from these equity groups. For example, some research notes that socio-economic status is a critical factor influencing the higher education participation and attainment of regional students. Other studies propose that particular attention should be paid to male students in regional and remote locations, because their under-representation in higher education is more severe than that of the female regional and remote population.*

*The factors that primarily affect equity cohorts such as financial stress, isolation, and work commitments further harm the emotional health and wellbeing of regional students. Students from equity groups are significantly more likely than metropolitan students to cite emotional health as a reason for considering deferring or withdrawing from university (84 per cent and 66 per cent respectively).”*

Charles Sturt University supports the analysis of the Regional Education Expert Advisory Group and findings regarding disadvantage in our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities. Reducing the disadvantage gap between our major cities and non-metropolitan Australia will require long-term government intervention and investment to correct education and training market failure. Interventions and investments would need to be designed within a national framework for RRR education and training that includes the following policy outcomes:

- i. Addresses the effects of regional disadvantage.
- ii. Tackles participation challenges of low SES household, Indigenous, older, studying part time, and/or the first in their family cohorts to attend university.
- iii. Reduces the difficulties encountered by students from challenged equity groups.
- iv. Eliminates socio-economic status as a critical factor influencing the higher education participation and attainment of regional students.
- v. Corrects the under-representation in higher education of male students in regional and remote locations.
- vi. Provides support mechanisms for RRR students that address financial stress, isolation and work commitments to ensure harm from emotional health and wellbeing issues does not compound.
- vii. Decreases emotional health of RRR students as the reason for considering deferring or withdrawing from university.

Drawing on this framework, Charles Sturt University proposes a suite of coordinated and complementary programs for implementation under a national strategy for RRR education and training. Delivering on the objectives and outputs in each the University's suggested programs would contribute to achieving the desired policy outcomes of a national framework for RRR education and training. While most of the University's proposed programs detailed in the sections above address the multiple forms of disadvantage encountered by RRR students, the University particularly highlights the following proposed programs which if implemented would substantially eliminate RRR disadvantage and level the playing field between RRR students and their metropolitan counterparts:

- Practical steps to support RRR students who experience multiple forms of disadvantage:
  - Access to study customised and tailored to local need, for example fund local government or community organisations to operate student learning spaces in communities with populations between 250 and 500 and study centres in towns of 500 to 2,500 people, fund service providers to operate study hubs in regional centres of 2,500 to 7,500 people and fund RTOs and HEPs to operate fit-for-purpose sites in regional cities of 7,500 to 20,000 and in cities of more than 20,000 people ensure university campus presence (refer above).
  - Equip all learning spaces, study centres, study hubs and fit-for-purpose sites with 1Gps broadband, computer hardware and software and video-conferencing facilities – for distance education and on-line study (where connection to home is impractical) (refer above).

- Fund visiting student support officers and academic skills counsellors based on student load at learning spaces, study centres, study hubs, fit-for-purpose and sites (refer above).
  - Subsidise travel and short-term accommodation costs for students from populations of less than 2,500 that need to attend regional university campuses and/or metropolitan university campuses for intensives (refer above).
  - Development and delivery of no-fee secondary subject bridging programs for school students that were restricted in their subject choice due to attendance at small schools, enabled by the States and Territories through COAG given their responsibilities for K-12 education (refer above).
  - Provide access to the HELP for living away from home expenses of RRR students studying in regional cities and/or metropolitan areas (refer above).
  - Ensure equality of opportunity by providing for relocation and living away from home expenses for RRR students attending university and/or TAFE in regional cities and metropolitan areas by way of mobility grants (refer above).
  - Provide direct subsidy for development and maintenance of high quality on-campus student accommodation at university campuses in regional cities (refer above).
  - Expansion of HEPP support for RRR students, particularly those attending learning spaces, study centres, study hubs and fit-for-purpose sites, with HEPP funding per student based on geographic isolation and challenged cohort type (refer above).
  - Peer to peer and student mentor programs at learning spaces, study centres, study hubs and fit-for-purpose sites (refer above).
  - Group study and social interaction opportunities at learning spaces, study centres, study hubs and fit-for-purpose sites (refer above).
  - Leverage broadband and video-conference capability at learning spaces, study centres, study hubs and fit-for-purpose sites to ensure valued and on-going connectivity with student and academic communities at regional city and metropolitan area campuses (refer above).
  - Expansion of HEPP support for RRR students, particularly addressing emotional and social support, including opportunities to meet, greet and interact with student peers and academic staff to build social networks and capital (refer above).
  - Social support programs for students that have relocated to the regional campus of universities based on the many successful programs at the large metropolitan university for inclusion of international students (refer above).
- Better support Indigenous people from RRR areas to access and succeed in tertiary education. The programs that the University has proposed above would contribute greatly to support of Indigenous RRR students who experience multiple forms of disadvantage.

Charles Sturt University was pleased to provide a submission to the Australian Government's *Closing the Gap Refresh – An Initiative of the Council of Australian Governments Discussion Paper* (refer, <https://closingthegaprefresh.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/resources/ctg-next-phase-discussion-paper.pdf>). The University's submission on the Discussion Paper is provided at [https://cdn.csu.edu.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/3084224/CSU\\_Sub\\_Closing\\_the\\_Gap.pdf](https://cdn.csu.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/3084224/CSU_Sub_Closing_the_Gap.pdf).

The University was pleased to respond to the questions raised in the Discussion Paper. Our submission was prepared in accordance with the framework set out in the Paper and cross references the findings of the Closing the Gap – Prime Ministers Report 2018 (refer, <https://closingthegap.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/ctg-report-2018.pdf>).

Given our leadership in Indigenous education over the past decade and more, as set out in the Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy (Attachment 4) which was implemented in 2009 it was vital that the University continued its Indigenous education leadership and provided a thorough and very comprehensive submission on the next phase of the Closing the Gap initiative.

The University's submission was developed with extensive input from across the University and all of our regional campuses and addresses six key themes to close the gap between Indigenous Australians and the rest of the Australian community regarding economic, social and environmental outcomes:

- a) to understand recognising the value of tertiary education and training;
- b) enabling people to work effectively together;
- c) enhancing reporting;
- d) using more effective and meaningful performance indicators;
- e) enabling people and value their differences; and,
- f) enabling people to commit to targets for responsibility and accountability.

Further, the University's submission provided a range of recommendations relating to COAG's refresh of the Closing the Gap reforms to provide for better outcomes for our communities across New South Wales and Victoria. An extract of the recommendations in the University's submission to the Australian Government's *Closing the Gap Refresh – An Initiative of the Council of Australian Governments Discussion Paper* is provided for reference at Attachment 5.

Many of the recommendations put forward by the University in this submission provide support Indigenous people from RRR areas to access and succeed in tertiary education. The University refers you to these recommendations for addressing this crucial area of RRR education and training policy.

### ***Attracting people and jobs***

*"Australia has a number of thriving regional universities and campuses, that not only contribute to developing skilled workers to drive the economy in their communities, but also national prosperity more generally. Graduates of regional universities tend to enjoy better employment and economic outcomes. After graduation 76 per cent of regional graduates have full-time work, compared to 71 per cent in the cities, with many working in regional areas. Moreover, during their studies, students at regional universities report high levels of satisfaction with their university experience.*

*Despite these better outcomes, regional communities sometimes struggle to attract university students and graduates. Addressing this challenge by strengthening regional universities could create a virtuous cycle where more people and potential entrepreneurs are attracted to RRR communities, which in turn may attract more employers and job opportunities to the area.*

*Further strengthening the capacity of regional universities and supporting their research capabilities is part of this challenge. Attracting more students and researchers to regional areas has the potential to drive growth in high-skilled jobs, and so reduce the disparity in post-secondary educational attainment between people in RRR and metropolitan areas.*

*Universities Australia has highlighted the role of universities in growing and keeping jobs in regional areas. From 2004 to 2011, start-ups contributed 90 per cent of Australia's net positive job creation, with university graduates founding 80 per cent of Australian start-ups.*

*More high-skilled jobs in RRR areas would mean fewer university graduates having to move to metropolitan areas to work in the area of their university degree. Currently, young people from regional backgrounds who complete a university degree are twice as likely to migrate to cities as those who complete a certificate level qualification."*

\* From Page 9, *National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy Framing Paper* Regional Education Expert Advisory Group. Department of Education & Training, Australian Government. December 2018.

Charles Sturt University supports the analysis of the Regional Education Expert Advisory Group and findings regarding attracting people and jobs to our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities. Attracting people and jobs to non-metropolitan Australia will require long-term government intervention and investment to correct education and training market failure. Interventions and investments would need to be designed within a national framework for RRR education and training that includes the following policy outcomes:

- i. Develops skilled workers to drive the economy in their communities, but also national prosperity more generally.
- ii. Address workforce need by strengthening regional universities to create a virtuous cycle where more people and potential entrepreneurs are attracted to RRR communities.
- iii. Supports the capacity of regional universities by growing research capability and capacity, particularly in disciplines relevant to RRR Australia.
- iv. Drives growth in high-skilled jobs to reduce disparity in post-secondary educational attainment between RRR Australia and our metropolitan cities.
- v. Recognises the importance of start-up business creation, development and growth as key to attracting and maintaining a highly educated and trained regional workforce, and the crucial role of universities in business incubation and acceleration.
- vi. Provides opportunity in life and work in regional Australia to stem the loss of graduates with university degrees over students who complete a certificate level qualification.

Drawing on this framework, Charles Sturt University proposes a suite of coordinated and complementary programs for implementation under a national strategy for RRR education and training. Delivering on the objectives and outputs in each the University's suggested programs would contribute to achieving the desired policy outcomes of a national framework for RRR education and training. The University's proposed programs include:

- Tertiary education and training providers stimulating economic growth in RRR areas:

- Programs that develop and transform RRR workforces, including business productivity that builds-on local competitive strengths and transform local economies and for improved public services such as education and health that further strengthen participation in local employment.
- Program that retain RRR students in RRR Australia (refer above).
- Programs that boost RRR participation rates in VET and higher education (refer above).
- Research activities aimed at addressing challenges and capturing opportunities before RRR Australia (that is undertaken in situ), including specific and increased funding for RRR Australia administered by the ARC and NH&MRC where physical, geographic presence in RRR is a mandatory criterion, as only RRR research institutions are able to effectively identify and address RRR challenges and opportunities in collaborative partnership with their local communities
- Support for arts and cultural activities, in collaboration with local community groups.
- Growing VET and higher education student enrolments in RRR Australia (refer above) which in turn grows the direct workforces of VET and higher education providers.
- Industry and business development functions, including start-up business creation – borne locals are likely to stay local.
- Funding for university and TAFE infrastructure, including for open-access centres of learning to encourage commitment to lifelong learning and introductory participation in informal and unaccredited study (as a pathway for more formal, accredited education and training) at learning spaces, study centres, study hubs and regional campuses.
- Strengthen and increase the attractiveness of regional universities:
  - Recognition of the higher costs associated with smaller cohort sizes and the need to maintain multiple campuses in regional Australia, compared to metropolitan areas – CGS funding must reflect this.
  - HELP discounts for student that study at regional campuses of University and continue to live and work in RRR Australia (for say a period of three to five years post-graduation).
  - Recognise that not all universities are alike, and that regional universities deal with diverse cohorts who often face multiple disadvantages which require greater support and hence funding (refer proposed programs above).
  - Recognition and investment in universities as the key part of regional economic and social transformation, and measure the return from investment on their community and industry engagement and impact are significant parts of their missions; all of which mean they face higher running costs due to geographic dispersion and lack of scale.
- Policies that would attract more metropolitan and international students to study at RRR universities and campuses:

- Governments and higher education and training providers to work in concert with local RRR communities to attract students to their area, to ensure local support for students moving to the area to study as well as ensure that student moving to the area to study are welcomed and supported by the community (not just their chosen institution of study).
- HELP discounts for student that study at regional campuses of University and continue to live and work in RRR Australia (for say a period of three to five years post-graduation) (see above).
- A long-term, broad, behavioural change promotional campaign about the value of advanced VET study and higher education study at the regional campuses of universities, based on health, road safety and anti-smoking models targeted at students and parents in metropolitan Australia. Key messaging from such a campaign would include:
  - ✓ Life style attributes.
  - ✓ Generally lower cost of living.
  - ✓ That graduates of regional universities tend to enjoy better employment and economic outcomes.
  - ✓ After graduation 76 per cent of regional graduates have full-time work, compared to 71 per cent in the cities, with many working in regional areas, moreover, during their studies, students at regional universities report high levels of satisfaction with their university experience.
  - ✓ Regional cities provide excellent opportunities for employment, career development and above all else provide very affordable housing (compared to metropolitan Australia).
- International marketing and promotion campaign informing potential international students of the value of studying at non-metropolitan campuses of Australian universities.
- Strengthen post-study work rights for international students who study and remain in regional areas, as well as increase existing points contribution to permanent residency for international students that study priority workforce qualifications, study at regional university campuses and continue to live and work in RRR Australia on graduation (up to 10-year retention conditions of residency).

Further, in attracting people and jobs to regional Australia, Charles Sturt University would like to refer you to two submissions we have prepared and provided to the Australian Government on regional development and regional inequality:

- *Submission into the Inquiry in the Indicators of and Impact of Regional Inequality in Australia*, Charles Sturt University, 18 July 2018 (refer, [https://cdn.csu.edu.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/3084140/CSU-Sub\\_-\\_Inquiry-into-the-Indicators-of,-and-Impact-of-Regional-Inequality-in-Australia.pdf](https://cdn.csu.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0020/3084140/CSU-Sub_-_Inquiry-into-the-Indicators-of,-and-Impact-of-Regional-Inequality-in-Australia.pdf)); and,
- *Submission to the Inquiry into Regional Development and Decentralisation*, Charles Sturt University, 15 September 2017 (refer, [https://www.csu.edu.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/2955907/Submission-Regional-Development-and-Decentralisation-Sub-120.pdf](https://www.csu.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/2955907/Submission-Regional-Development-and-Decentralisation-Sub-120.pdf)).



The University strongly encourages the Government to draw on the recommendations provided in these submissions as they relate to tertiary education and training outcomes in RRR Australia. Many of our recommendations in these submissions could be included in the development and implementation of a National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy, particularly the policy interventions and program investments that the University has previously recommended. Extracts of the recommendations of these two submissions are provided for reference at Attachments 6 and 7 respectively.

### ***Implementing and monitoring a national strategy***

*"The National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy will provide a framework to address the challenges that prevent people from RRR communities from accessing and completing tertiary education.*

*Australia is a large and sparsely populated country and there is a complex range of different systems and players, including various levels of government, involved in the delivery of education services. Australian communities and industries also have their own particular education and training needs, meaning different approaches are needed for different contexts.*

*Individual communities, industries, the education sector and governments have supported a range of initiatives over recent years that have made a positive difference and have helped to lift access and attainment rates. However, achieving greater national coherence across these activities remains an ongoing challenge.*

*Consequently, as well as identifying practical immediate actions and long-term strategies that can make a real difference to outcomes for students and communities, it will be important to consider how to implement new initiatives effectively in a way that complements current effort, and how to best monitor the success of the Strategy.*

*To bring together this effort and oversee implementation of the Strategy, the Halsey Review floated the idea of appointing an independent Commissioner, similar to the approach taken in health with the establishment of a National Rural Health Commissioner. Other issues to be considered as part of implementation arrangements include what goals and targets should be set, for example around educational attainment, over the life of the Strategy."*

\* From Page 10, *National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy Framing Paper* Regional Education Expert Advisory Group. Department of Education & Training, Australian Government. December 2018.

Charles Sturt University supports the analysis of the Regional Education Expert Advisory Group and findings regarding implementation and monitoring of a national strategy for RRR aimed at improving study outcomes in our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities. Effectively implementing and monitoring a national strategy for RRR that closes the study outcomes gap between our major cities and non-metropolitan Australia will require long-term government intervention and investment to correct education and training market failure. Interventions and investments would need to be designed within a national framework for RRR education and training that includes the following policy outcomes:

- i. Addresses the challenges that prevent people from RRR communities from accessing and completing tertiary education.
- ii. Supports the complex range of different systems and players, including various levels of government, involved in the delivery of education services.

- iii. Fosters specialisation as Australian communities and industries have their own particular education and training needs.
- iv. Builds on local success where communities, industries, the education sector and governments have supported a range of initiatives over recent years that have made a positive difference and have helped to lift access and attainment rates.
- v. Achieves greater national coherence across RRR student support mechanisms and activities.
- vi. Identifies practical immediate actions and long-term strategies that can make a real difference to outcomes for students and communities.
- vii. Appointment of a Commissioner for RRR Tertiary Education and Training, similar to the approach taken in health with the establishment of a National Rural Health Commissioner.
- viii. Identifies real, tangible and easily measured goals and targets for performance monitoring of intervention and investment success.

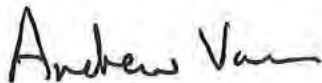
Drawing on this framework, Charles Sturt University proposes a suite of coordinated and complementary programs for implementation under a national strategy for RRR education and training. Delivering on the objectives and outputs in each the University's suggested programs would contribute to achieving the desired policy outcomes of a national framework for RRR education and training. The University believes that a national framework should be built on the following principles:

1. Need to be accountable and responsible – documented, agreed and understood outcomes.
2. Require independent governance and management.
3. Provide a long-term commitment, multi-generational commitment – change will be slow and will need to be measured over decades.
4. Include metrics for measuring success – a policy and program framework clearly articulating outcomes, objectives and outputs.
5. Be built on evidence-based interventions and investments requiring verifiable baseline data and repeatable data collection.
6. Focused on student and community outcomes not institutional performance.
7. Regularly and transparently report to stakeholders.
8. Leverage government initiatives in other portfolios for example health, indigenous, northern development, economic competitiveness etc.
  - National Regional Education Commissioner to oversee strategy:
    - Charles Sturt University strongly supports the appointment of a National Regional Education Commissioner, based on the impact of the National Mental Health Commissioner, with such a role being the focal point for government and stakeholder consultation and collaboration, as well as an advocate for policy development and intervention and policy evaluation and impact.

- The role of the Commissioner would be based on the framework principles set out above.
- Success measures, goals and targets for tertiary education and training attainment:
  - Outcomes, objectives and output key performance indicators and measures of success would need to be developed for each of the programs that the University proposes above, with these indicators and measures developed in the context of the framework principles set out above.
  - The overarching success measure of the National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy would be RRR student participation in tertiary education and training, completion rates of RRR students in their chosen field of study at least as good as their metropolitan counterparts and growth in student numbers and community participation in regional university campuses.

I would be delighted to provide further information to the Expert Regional Education Advisory Group and your Department and would be available to provide evidence at any proposed consultations that you may undertake in relation to considering the merits of the strengthening Australia's regional, rural and remote tertiary education and training system.

Yours sincerely



**Professor Andrew Vann**  
Vice-Chancellor



**The Hon Dan Tehan MP**  
Minister for Education

Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Telephone: 02 6277 7350

Our Ref: MS18-900327

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Dear Professor Vann

Today, I have announced a new package of regional higher education initiatives to increase the Australian Government's investment in rural and regional Australia to provide more choice and access to regional students pursuing higher education. The package provides \$134.8 million over four years of additional measures that build on the Government's response to the *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education* (the Halsey Review), the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarship Scheme and the Regional Study Hubs Initiative. The package also supports student growth in five universities with a regional focus. Today's announcement brings the Government's total commitment to regional higher education to almost \$400 million over five years.

Expanded Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarship Scheme

The Government is investing an extra \$34.1 million over four years to support an additional 1,955 students living in rural, regional and remote Australia. The Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships Scheme was implemented in 2018. The scholarships provide up to \$18,000 to support rural, regional and remote students studying Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), including Health and Agricultural Science at Certificate IV to PhD level. They also provide support for internships to increase students' job readiness.

Round one of the program awarded more than 500 scholarships to students commencing in 2018. Round two, for students commencing at the beginning of 2019, is currently open for applications (closing on 14 December 2018). The Government's increased investment means a total of 1,555 scholarships (up from 700) are available in this round. An additional round, of 1,100 scholarships, will be announced in early 2019 for the second half of the year.

I encourage you to ensure that prospective students to your university from regional and remote Australia are made aware of these scholarships.

#### Expanded Regional Study Hubs Initiative

The Government is investing an additional \$7.5 million over four years to expand the Regional Study Hubs Initiative, to support 16 Regional Study Hubs in 22 locations across all states and territories, excluding the ACT. The Regional Study Hubs Initiative forms part of the Government's strategy to support regional, rural and remote education and its commitment to ensure equity of access and achievement for regional, rural and remote students. Regional Study Hubs typically support regional students to study courses locally, delivered by distance from any Australian university, by providing greater access to study support and infrastructure. Please find attached the list of approved Regional Study Hubs.

The Government is also providing \$14 million over four years to fully support an additional 500 Commonwealth supported bachelor places (CSPs) for regional, rural and remote students supported by the Regional Study Hubs.

The Department of Education and Training (the Department) will shortly work with the successful Regional Study Hubs to establish funding arrangements, as well as the allocation and distribution of the CSPs with their university partners.

#### National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy

The Government is also proposing to develop a National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy. To build on the Government's response to the Halsey Review, I am establishing an Expert Regional Education Advisory Group to drive the strategy and advise Government on the ongoing education and training needs of regional communities. The Expert Advisory Group, to be chaired by the Hon Dr Denis Napthine, will also prepare a National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Report to Government on priority recommendations for action, including advice on the merits of establishing a Rural Education Commissioner to oversee implementation of the strategy. The Expert Advisory Group will work with a department based secretariat to ensure community engagement in the development of the Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy. Details of the consultation process of the Expert Advisory Group will be provided to you in the near future.

I would encourage you to put forward ideas on issues impacting education in regional Australia, and most importantly what strategies we could collectively develop across the Commonwealth and in partnership with states and territories to make a lasting and real difference for regional, rural and remote communities.

For further information about the regional higher education package, please visit <https://www.education.gov.au/access-and-participation> or email [equity@education.gov.au](mailto:equity@education.gov.au).

### Specific support for five regionally-focused universities

The Government will invest \$92.5 million over four years to support student growth in five universities with a regional focus: Central Queensland University, James Cook University, University of Newcastle Central Coast Medical School and Research Institute, University of the Sunshine Coast Caboolture and Fraser Coast campuses, and Federation University Australia Berwick campus. This investment responds to issues arising from the transfer of campuses, and supports existing Government infrastructure investments as well as its priorities for Northern Australia.

### Reallocation of enabling, sub-bachelor and postgraduate CSPs

In the 2017-18 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, the Australian Government announced that a new allocation mechanism for enabling, sub-bachelor and postgraduate CSPs would be introduced from 2019. The new mechanism will address distribution issues that have arisen as a result of historical and ad hoc decisions made over time and will better match places to student need.

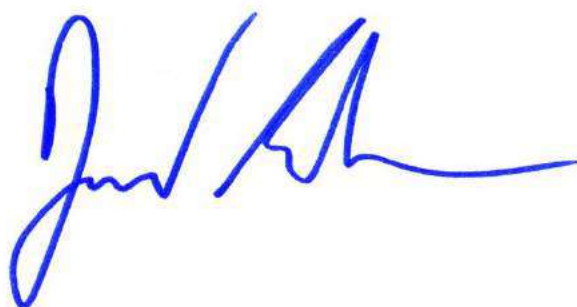
To ensure there is sufficient opportunity for the higher education sector to participate fully in the development of new arrangements, and to ensure the new mechanism provides a robust framework for the allocation of places going forward, the new arrangements will now commence from 1 January 2020 rather than January 2019 as originally announced.

A consultation paper setting out potential options for the future allocation of these places has been released on the Department's website and I encourage the sector to participate in the consultation process.

The Department will also be writing to universities in the coming days to invite applications for the additional 500 enabling and sub-bachelor places which will support students in regional areas.

I look forward to working with you as we implement these new measures.

Yours sincerely



**DAN TEHAN**

12 November 2018

## Regional Study Hubs Successful Recipients 2018

Recipient	State	Location
Country Universities Centre Snowy Monaro	NSW	Cooma
Country Universities Centre Far West	NSW	Broken Hill
Country Universities Centre Goulburn	NSW	Goulburn
Country Universities Centre Clarence Valley	NSW	Clarence Valley
Country Universities Centre North West	NSW	Narrabri and Moree
Country Universities Centre Western Riverina	NSW	Griffith and Leeton
Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation	NT	Nhulunbuy, Ramingining*, Milingimbi* and Galiwin'ku*
Wuyagiba Study Hub Aboriginal Corporation	NT	Wuyagiba, South East Arnhem Land
Goondiwindi SILO	QLD	Goondiwindi
Rural City of Murray Bridge	SA	Murray Bridge City
RDA Barossa Gawler Light Adelaide Plains	SA	Nuriootpa (Barossa Valley)
Upper Spencer Gulf	SA	Port Augusta (from 2020) and Port Pirie (from 2019)
West Coast Heritage	TAS	West Coast
Gippsland East Local Learning and Employment Network	VIC	Bairnsdale
Geraldton Universities Centre	WA	Geraldton
Pilbara Tertiary Education Centre	WA	Pilbara

\* *proposed satellite hubs*



## Recommendations

Charles Sturt University recommends the following with regard strengthening Australia's regional, rural and remote education system for better economic, social and environmental outcomes for students and our communities across Australia:

### 1.1 The gap in educational achievement between regional, rural and remote students and metropolitan students

***Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:***

- ***That student aspiration and capability built in and through schools be recognised as essential for regional, rural and remote educational outcomes and that governments directly invest in this area of comparative market failure (when compared to metropolitan outcomes).***
- ***That educational pathway options for regional, rural and remote students be greatly expanded to materially deliver access and equity gains for non-metropolitan Australians. Refer to recommendations provided by Charles Sturt University in submission to the Senate Education and Training Committee Inquiry of 7 July 2017 regarding the proposed Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment (A More Sustainable, Responsive and Transparent Higher Education System) Bill 2017).***
- ***The design, development and delivery by higher education training providers of a greater range of Bachelor programs that articulate from vocational education and training (VET) diplomas and Certificate 4s, including greater integration between levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF), including amendment of National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (NVR) and Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) regulations to enable nesting of VET and higher education qualifications and vice versa.***
- ***That Government, Schools and tertiary education continue to focus and investment in participation and success programs by government, schools and tertiary education and training providers, including continuation and expansion of HEPPP, particularly in regional, rural and remote Australia.***
- ***Again refer recommendations provided by Charles Sturt University in submission to the Senate Education and Training Committee Inquiry of 7 July 2017 regarding the proposed Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment (A More Sustainable, Responsive and Transparent Higher Education System) Bill 2017).***

### 1.2 The key barriers and challenges that impact on the educational outcomes of regional, rural and remote students, including aspirations and access issues

***Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:***

- ***That governments design and implement funded programs that support pathways for non-traditional students in regional, rural and remote Australia, building on the successful interventions and learnings of the University.***



- ***That governments design and implement pathway programs that build on the regional retention results of the Graduate Outcomes Survey and the crucial role the University plays in developing and securing skills for the regional workforce, which in turn supports the viability of regional businesses and communities.***
- ***That governments provide additional funding for the University to work with schools and their communities in promoting the benefits of, and developing aspiration for, higher education across non-metropolitan Australia. This work has been demonstrated to be a prime influence in the increasing number of university enrolments by regional, rural and remote students reported in the national data.***
- ***That governments provide additional support and funding to enable higher education to provide role models (for example, university academics, graduates working in the community, and non-metropolitan focused teaching, learning and research institutes such as the proposed Murray Darling Medical School), noting that for universities to be able to continue to influence regional secondary students in this crucial area public funding will be required.***
- ***That to provide an appropriate evidence base, government support and expand Charles Sturt University's pilot research into the barriers and challenges that impact on the educational outcomes of regional, rural and remote students (CIN Educational Consulting & Charles Sturt University, Office of Indigenous Affairs). This work would include aspirations and access issues to address this as a first step to enabling all regional, rural, remote school leaders, onsite access to contextually relevant, face-to-face professional learning and on-going support.***
- ***That governments, collectively utilise individual rural and remote schools as the contextual centre for professional development for principals and school executives. Such work would include ongoing and professional support, delivered by experienced rural and remote education experts insitu.***
- ***That State governments partner with universities, such as Charles Sturt, to prepare and accredit professional development for educators specifically for rural and remote school leadership in rural and remote communities throughout Australia, this would include pre-teaching appointment and on-going insitu professional development and mentoring.***
- ***The Review team examine Charles Sturt University's early research findings referred to herein and conduct consultations within the pilot communities that this nascent work is being undertaken in, as well as request the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training to partner with the University to progress this research enquiry for tailored, contextualised and insitu professional development of rural and remote educators for improvement of student learning outcomes (CIN Educational Consulting & Charles Sturt University, Office of Indigenous Affairs).***

- 1.3 The appropriateness and effectiveness of current modes of education delivered to these students, including the use of information and communications technology and the importance of face to face regional, rural and remote education provision

*Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:*

- *That the Commonwealth Government, as a matter of national urgency, immediately review, refine and revise its information technology and communications policies, to ensure that all Australians, including those in regional, rural and remote Australia have world's-best access to the internet.*
- *To this end, the Commonwealth Government's national broadband network initiative be expanded to provide full fibre (or equivalent) to the home for all regional, rural and remote Australians, noting that failure to do so will consign non-metropolitan Australia to great education disadvantage and irrelevance in the digital century.*
- *That technology and communications related initiatives in the Commonwealth Government's Regions 2030 Unlocking Opportunity policy statement be revised to reflect the two recommendations above, and that following revision of the policy statement and our two recommendations above be funded in full and implemented as a matter of priority to ensure a viable future for regional, rural and remote Australia.*
- *That technology and communications related initiatives in the Commonwealth Government's Regions 2030 Unlocking Opportunity policy statement be revised to reflect the two recommendations above, and that follow revision the policy statement and our two recommendations above be funded in full and implemented as a matter of priority to ensure a viable future for regional, rural and remote Australia.*
- *That government devise new and effective ways of financing information technology and communications access, hardware and software for regional, rural and remote students and their family's that consider the often very short life spans of technology products, noting that current public funding models to do not take into account the useful life of technology, and therefore subject regional, rural and remote students to additional disadvantage over their metropolitan peers.*
- *Finally, Charles Sturt University supports the recommendations provided by Mr Craig Petersen, the Principal of Denison College of Secondary Education and Deputy President of the New South Wales Secondary Principal's Council, in his submission to the Independent Review of Regional, Rural and Remote Education.*

*Also, refer to recommendations in Section 1.5 below.*

1.4 The effectiveness of public policies and programs that have been implemented to bridge the divide

*Charles Sturt University supports the recommendations provided by Mr Craig Petersen, the Principal of Denison College of Secondary Education and Deputy President of the New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council, in his submission to the Independent Review of Regional, Rural and Remote Education.*

*Charles Sturt University has made a number of other recommendations in Section 4.5, that we believe would strengthen effectiveness of public policies and programs that have been implemented to bridge the divide between regional, rural and remote education outcomes and those of metropolitan Australia.*

1.5 The gaps and opportunities to help students successfully transition from school to further study, training and employment

*Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:*

1. *Development of complementary investment in soft resources that leverage the use of existing hard resource facilities in regional Australia.*
2. *An agile funding model that removes barriers to cross-sector collaboration and rewards engagement with community and industry. In particular, a dedicated strategy to enable education providers to develop seamless transitions between Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education providers (Acer: [credit based pathways in tertiary education](#)) (NCVER; a half-open door: pathways for VET award holders into Australian universities 2013), including:
  - *a continuing focus on implementing the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) operational guidelines for pathways, in particular working towards guaranteed entry into Higher Education courses for VET award holders;*
  - *combined educational leadership from all three sectors, with dedicated, senior roles that hold responsibility for collaboration and education pathways;*
  - *investment in systems to monitor student progress and achievements within and between all three sectors (enabled through the Universal Student Identifier (USI)); and,*
  - *accessible, well-structured information about pathway options for students and key influencers (including parents and careers counsellors).**
3. *A model that has a core function of maximising the use of technology and capacity building around digital service delivery in a way that addresses disparities in regional capacity and ability (Morgan, 2016) and addresses substantial growth in regional to metropolitan migration for Higher Education*

*study (a 75 per cent increase between 2008 – 2014) (National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education; Regional Student Participation and Migration 2017).*

- 4. Education pathways that address existing and emerging workforce needs, customised for regional communities. The pathways should have a focus on digital ability, critical thinking and entrepreneurship and critically, expose students to industry and vice versa.*
- 5. Incentives for earlier and deeper collaboration between both the schools and VET sectors, and the Higher Education sector. This would include more opportunities for schools and VET students (and key influencers such as parents) to engage with their local education providers both within the school, VET campus and on Higher Education campuses.*
- 6. More coordination around pathway promotions within schools, between Higher Education and Vocational education providers, with the intent of reducing duplication and triplication activities (and to ensure that no school misses out).*
- 7. A continuing focus on the professional development of community and industry leaders within regional Australia, alongside and in collaboration with educational leaders. This professional development should focus on building an advanced capability for collaboration in complex and changing environments, managing ambiguity and stakeholder engagement.*
- 8. A core requirement, for digital ability and capacity be raised. Digital inclusion research indicates that regional Australians are 20 per cent less likely to use online technologies to manage their work and personal lives than the national average (Roy Morgan, Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2016). With technological impacts cited as one of five disruptive megatrends for the next 10 years by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC: [what is a megatrend and why do they matter?](#)), a dedicated focus will help to bridge this gap.*
- 9. A broader definition of information and communications technology (ICT) investment within education sectors. While Professor Halsey's Discussion Paper touches on the need for innovation in the use of ICT (Pages 33 & 34), it does not address regional disparities associated with community ability in the use of ICT. Specific investment is required to ensure that once technologies are accessible, teachers and educational leaders can make the best use of this technology. This would include investment in best practice use of videoconferencing and collaboration between networks of connected education providers.*
- 10. A continued focus on providing opportunities for students to access education and training in the regional areas that they reside. Students who study in regional areas tend to remain in regional areas after graduation and provide a ready supply of professionals to fill critical regional roles (Acer: [Credit based pathway in tertiary education](#)).*

1.6 **Innovative approaches that support regional, rural and remote students to succeed in school and in their transition to further study, training and employment**

*Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:*

- *that the Aspiration and Outreach agenda be continued;*
- *that university school zones for partnership activity between universities be established to allow for greater collaboration between institutions;*
- *ongoing targeted support tailored to address access, participation and success issues faced by Indigenous peoples who reside in regional, rural and remote areas; and,*
- *strategies to enhance Indigenous participation should be designed in conjunction with local communities and embrace a whole of university approach.*

*Furthermore, in this respect, Charles Sturt University recommends ongoing targeted support tailored to address access, participation and success issues faced by Indigenous peoples who reside in regional, rural and remote areas.*

*We also recommend that strategies used should be designed in conjunction with local communities and embrace a whole of university approach. That is, success in this area will not be enhanced by central, standardised approaches. For example, Charles Sturt University's Strong Moves mentoring program, links to Future Moves and to the Indigenous Student Centres at the University. This mentoring program was built in consultation with parents and students from our local communities and provides a seamless relationship for school students with staff and students in the University.*

1.7 **Charles Sturt University - Learnings from regional New South Wales and Victoria and potential intervention strategies to boost regional, rural and remote educational outcomes.**

*Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:*

- *that the Aspiration and Outreach agenda be continued;*
- *the proposed budget reforms that remove enabling funding to be rejected;*
- *that consideration is given to the need for additional strategies to effectively support and engage regional rural and remote students who study by distance education; and,*
- *that three-year funding streams for outreach funding are established.*

*Furthermore, Charles Sturt University supports a minimum three-year HEPPP funding stream to encourage schools' continued partnerships and participation, as per the August 2017 EPHEA statement:*

***This three-year funding stream would mean that equity practitioners can coordinate widening participation and retention programs, resources and partnerships more effectively and sustainably.***

***(EPHEA 2017, Information to Government Representatives regarding the Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment [A More Sustainable, Responsive and Transparent Higher Education System] Bill 2017.)***

***We also recommend that the Independent Review into Regional Rural and Remote Education examine the early research findings from work currently underway, including that of Charles Sturt University. In particular, we recommend that the Review consult face-to-face with the pilot schools and communities and drive a partnership with the University to progress the pilot and research enquiry.***

***Finally, we recommend that the Review team consider the early trends emerging from this research and partner with Charles Sturt University for further development of the model.***



Australian Government  
Department of Education and Training

# National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy Framing Paper

## Regional Education Expert Advisory Group

*December 2018*







# 1. BACKGROUND

## The National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy

Regional, rural and remote (RRR)\* communities make a substantial contribution not only to Australia’s economy, but also our broader social and cultural life. The ongoing efforts of communities and education providers across the continuum of learning are crucial to underpinning this contribution.

Nevertheless, there continues to be a significant disparity in tertiary education outcomes for students from these areas. The Australian Government is developing a National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy (the Strategy) to drive increased participation of RRR students in post-secondary education. Increased performance in post-secondary education generally leads to better overall outcomes for students in terms of income and employment. In addition, increasing the level of post-secondary education attainment in RRR areas can increase the economic prosperity of those communities. Recommendation 11 of the *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education*<sup>1</sup> (IRRRRE) proposed that the Government ‘establish a national focus for regional, rural and remote education, training and research to enhance access, outcomes and opportunities in regional Australia’.

The Strategy will focus on building capacity and aspiration towards tertiary education, developing better educational opportunities and pathways, supporting students to transition from secondary to post-secondary education (including relocation and careers advice), and increasing access and attainment levels in RRR areas.

The Strategy is also aimed at building on existing initiatives that support RRR education, including supporting the performance of regional universities and vocational education providers, enhancing the role of RRR education providers in the economic development of RRR centres, and attracting people to the regions.

## The Expert Advisory Group roles and responsibilities

The Minister for Education has appointed an Expert Advisory Group with expertise and understanding of regional communities’ needs, education and training, economic development and industry engagement. The members of the Expert Advisory Group are:

- The Hon Dr Denis Napthine, former Victorian Premier (Chair)
- Emeritus Professor Peter Lee, former Vice Chancellor Southern Cross University
- Ms Caroline Graham, Chief Executive Officer, Regional Skills Training
- Ms Meredith Wills, former Director, Geraldton Universities Centre.

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\* This paper uses “Regional, Rural and Remote (RRR)” as an umbrella term to characterise the diverse range of non-metropolitan areas across Australia. Where the terms “regional” or “remote” are used, they are referring to specific classes of remoteness under the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS), which provides a framework of statistical areas used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and other organisations to provide statistics that are comparable and spatially integrated. There are five classes of remoteness based on their relative access to services: Major cities, Inner regional, Outer regional, Remote and Very remote. While some communities and individuals also identify themselves as “rural”, sometimes in association with particular rural industries such as agriculture, this term is not explicitly defined and does not correspond to any specific class of areas within this framework. From a statistical perspective, the term “Rural” is used to describe any population not contained in an Urban Centre or Locality. For more information on the Remoteness Structure see the [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\): Volume 5 - Remoteness Structure](http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/home/Australian+Statistical+Geography+Standard+(ASGS)) publication ([http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/home/Australian+Statistical+Geography+Standard+\(ASGS\)](http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/home/Australian+Statistical+Geography+Standard+(ASGS)))

The Terms of Reference for the Expert Advisory Group are to:

- build on the work of the *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education* and investigate the need for a commissioner to oversee the implementation of the Strategy
- identify strategies and policies for the Australian Government to put in place to bring the attainment rate of regional, rural and remote students to parity with students from metropolitan areas
- examine the literature and research on aspiration, access and success for regional students and the barriers to access to tertiary education facing people in regional Australia
- leverage research undertaken on the provision of tertiary education in regional Australia and the support services provided to regional, rural and remote students at university
- consider the current policy options supported by the Government, including student income support as well as the opportunities presented by the Regional Study Hubs Program
- recommend how current and potential new approaches should be best combined as a coherent suite of policy responses to address issues particular to a region, to deliver improved higher education outcomes to students in regional, rural and remote Australia
- recommend a target for regional, rural and remote education outcomes.

The Expert Advisory Group will engage with selected stakeholders including national peak professional organisations, education authorities, universities and vocational education and training (VET) providers. These consultations will inform the development of an interim report, due end of March 2019, and a final report due end of June 2019. The final report will make priority recommendations, and put forward a Strategy for action over the longer term.

### **The process for developing the Strategy**

This Framing Paper is the first step in developing the Strategy. The purpose of this paper is to highlight areas the Expert Advisory Group plans to focus on and to draw out practical policy suggestions.

Past reviews by federal and state governments have clearly identified the many challenges that RRR students face which often contribute to lower levels of post-secondary participation and attainment. The Expert Advisory Group aims to focus on a number of high priority issues and challenges, and to develop targeted recommendations to help RRR students achieve higher levels of post-secondary education in the short- and long-term.

The Expert Advisory Group is seeking action-orientated responses to the challenges and key questions identified in this paper. Your responses to the Framing Paper should focus on practical steps the Government could take to improve tertiary education access and attainment of people from RRR backgrounds. Please email your responses to [regionalstrategy@education.gov.au](mailto:regionalstrategy@education.gov.au) by **5:00pm (AEDT)** on **1 February 2019**.

This Framing Paper, and stakeholder responses to it, will inform a series of Key Issues Papers. The Expert Advisory Group plans to release Key Issues Papers in February.

## 2. THE PROBLEM

Tertiary education attainment in regional and remote areas has grown significantly over the last decade. Nevertheless, there remains a significant disparity in outcomes between RRR and metropolitan areas. Around 54 per cent of people in major cities have a Certificate IV or above qualification, compared to 33 per cent in regional areas and 26 per cent in remote areas. In major cities, around 40 per cent of people have a bachelor degree or higher, compared to 20 per cent in regional areas and less than 17 per cent in remote areas<sup>2</sup>.

While university participation and attainment is higher in cities than in regional and remote areas, the opposite is the case in VET. In 2017, 22 per cent of 15 to 64 year olds living in cities were enrolled in VET, growing to 30 per cent in inner regional areas, 31 per cent in outer regional areas and 36 per cent in remote areas<sup>3</sup>. The association between remoteness and VET attainment reflects proportionately greater provision of lower-level vocational education qualifications in RRR areas<sup>4</sup>.

Where a young Australian grows up influences their educational attainment<sup>5</sup>. Even when controlling for differences in Australian Tertiary Admission Ranking (ATAR) scores, regional students are five per cent less likely to attend university than those from metropolitan areas<sup>6</sup>. Compared to those who grow up in cities, young Australians from regional areas are around half as likely to have a university qualification or higher-level VET qualification by their mid-twenties<sup>7</sup>. When students from regional and remote backgrounds do undertake university study, they are less likely to graduate than metropolitan students (60 per cent for remote students, 69 per cent for regional students and 75 per cent for metropolitan)<sup>8</sup>.

These outcomes are, in part, driven by poorer education outcomes generally, starting in early childhood and school. In some RRR areas, there is limited access to high quality early childhood education, which can lead to reduced educational and economic outcomes later in life<sup>9</sup>. Gaps in learning widen throughout schooling, with metropolitan students making greater learning gains across schooling compared to regional and remote students<sup>10</sup>. By the time they reach fifteen years of age, students in metropolitan areas are around twelve months of learning ahead of students in regional areas and eighteen months ahead of students in remote areas. In addition, 78 per cent of students in major cities complete Year 12 or equivalent by the age of 19, falling to 64 per cent in inner regional areas and 43 per cent in very remote regions<sup>11</sup>. Those that do finish Year 12 and go onto university typically have lower ATAR scores<sup>12</sup>.

At the same time, there can be many advantages to being educated in RRR areas. Living in RRR communities can offer great education opportunities in schooling, higher education and vocational training. The experience of living in regional communities also affords opportunities to develop practical and interpersonal skills, together with resilience and ingenuity, that enable future professional success. For example, people from regional backgrounds are strongly represented in leadership positions in Australian businesses – 38 per cent of Australian Chief Executive Officers of ASX 100 companies grew up in regional Australia<sup>13</sup>.

There is no single reason why RRR students have different tertiary education outcomes to their metropolitan peers. Rather, students from RRR backgrounds encounter various obstacles and challenges that those in metropolitan areas typically do not. While many RRR students overcome these challenges through support from others and perseverance, many do not.

A major challenge facing RRR students is that there are fewer higher education providers located in RRR areas, which often means students need to relocate for further studies. Regional students are twice as likely as metropolitan students to move away for university<sup>14</sup>. The social dislocation,

emotional and financial costs of moving away from family and social support networks can place a significant burden on students and their families<sup>15</sup>.

In contrast, some level of VET services is available in most areas, with VET playing a vital role in underpinning access to tertiary education, including through VET in schools and other schools-based pathways. However, service offerings vary significantly across regions. In some areas, there are very limited opportunities to progress onto higher-level vocational qualifications, or to access articulation processes that recognise prior learning if students want to pursue higher education.

The lower likelihood of students from RRR areas undertaking university study does not simply reflect lesser opportunities. Differences in students' aspirations also play a role. While university applicants from regional areas are more likely to receive an offer, they are less likely to accept it (70 per cent compared to 77 per cent for metropolitan students)<sup>16</sup>. For many RRR students, VET is a great choice and the appropriate pathway to the economic opportunities and jobs available in their local communities. The skills gained through vocational training are in demand in many rural industries, such as agriculture, tourism and mining. Furthermore, students may prefer to pursue opportunities in trades, which can provide more immediate financial benefits, or in other sectors where VET qualifications are important such as health and community services. Consequently, there is a need to support education opportunities across the full spectrum of vocational training and higher education, so that RRR students can pursue the careers and lives they most highly value.

### 3. THE CHALLENGES

There are five major challenges particularly important in addressing the lower levels of access and attainment in tertiary education for students from RRR backgrounds.

#### **Challenge A: There are fewer study options available in RRR areas**

The first is how to build on the current range of innovative models for delivering tertiary education outside our major cities, to support a range of models and pathways that meet the diverse needs of RRR communities and industries.

A sparse continent and population that primarily clusters in cities creates challenges in the delivery of tertiary education across Australia. RRR areas often do not have the population density to sustain extensive tertiary options. The lack of access to study options contributes to declining participation rates in both university and higher-level vocational study as regions become more remote. Compared to those in very remote areas, people living in major cities are four times as likely to participate in university, and twice as likely to participate in higher-level vocational training<sup>17</sup>.

#### **Putting the challenge in context.**

Victoria has easily the highest population density of Australian states. Even though the state is relatively small for Australia, regional Victorians need to travel significant distances to access educational opportunities. For the 739 residents of Hopetoun, the closest tertiary education opportunities are in Horsham, an 80-minute drive away. In Horsham, there are a number of vocational training options and a Federation University campus offers bachelor degrees in Social Sciences and Business. La Trobe University offers a wider range of bachelor degree options, but the campuses in Mildura and Bendigo are approximately 120 minutes and 160 minutes away by car.

Currently, access to higher education is provided through a range of different service types and locations, including metropolitan-based universities and their regional campuses, regionally based universities, and Regional Study Hubs. Regional Study Hubs support students to study courses by distance, by providing access to study support and infrastructure in RRR areas.

A key issue is how to build on the important role of VET in RRR areas to further improve outcomes for students. An important pathway for boosting university attainment for students in RRR areas is through articulation or transfer arrangements between VET and higher education. Students from

regional backgrounds are twice as likely as metropolitan students to have completed VET courses before enrolling in university (16 per cent of students compared to 8 per cent)<sup>18</sup>. However, articulation arrangements are not consistent across the sector and vary between institutions.

VET delivered in schools provides another pathway to tertiary education and employment opportunities, often drawing on partnerships between schools, local industry and the VET sector. At the same time, there is a range of challenges, including how to promote more consistent quality and access across Australia.

Provision of online learning is another way to enhance education access in RRR areas. Regional students are more likely to engage in off-campus university study than those in metropolitan areas<sup>19</sup>. While online provision gives greater opportunities, challenges specific to RRR areas such as unreliable internet access and social isolation can significantly reduce its effectiveness.

## **Challenge B: Financial, emotional and social challenges for students who relocate**

There is substantial mobility between our cities and RRR areas, which has major economic and social benefits for Australia. However, moving can involve significant costs and other pressures for students and their families. To pursue wider opportunities in education, students often need to relocate. In 2014, 57 per cent of regional students relocated for university studies compared to 27 per cent of metropolitan students<sup>20</sup>.

The cost of tertiary education and expenses associated with living away from home are significant barriers to participation and completion for RRR students<sup>21</sup>. For students who relocate to attend university, the associated living costs can double the cost of a higher education degree<sup>22</sup>. These costs affect student aspirations. Regional students who are from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds are twice as likely to perceive the cost of university fees as prohibitive<sup>23</sup>.

### **Putting the challenge in context.**

Relocating for further study imposes large challenges for some RRR students. For example, a student from the regional city of Karratha, WA faces a sixteen-hour drive to the University of Western Australia. A student could stay at a university residential college where fees are approximately \$20,000 for nine months of accommodation. Alternatively, spending a relatively modest budget of \$300 per week for rent, transport, food and utilities for twelve months comes to \$15,600 per year. Any time that student wants to return to Karratha to visit friends and family they are looking at prices for the two-hour return flight starting at around \$650.

For those students who are able to relocate, relocating and living away from home results in financial and emotional challenges<sup>24</sup>. Students from regional backgrounds are almost twice as likely as those from metropolitan backgrounds to report financial stress due to the associated costs of relocating (44 per cent compared to 24 per cent) even when relocating to a regional university<sup>25</sup>.

There are also emotional costs of relocating for study. Moving away from home not only means leaving behind friends and family, but also poses the challenge of building a new social and support network. Regional students are also more likely to consider withdrawing early from university (25 per cent, compared to 19 per cent of metropolitan students), and cite emotional health as the main reason for doing so due to separation from their support networks<sup>26</sup>.

At the same time, moving to a new physical, social and cultural environment can lead to social dislocation. Regional students are more likely to be the first in their family to attend university (37 per cent compared to 27 per cent of metropolitan students)<sup>27</sup>, and so may take longer to feel they belong on campus. Those from RRR schools may also not know any other students at their university to assist with their initial transition on campus. These factors contribute to 10 per cent of regional students and 15 per cent of remote students dropping out of university before the commencement of second

year, compared to 8 per cent of metropolitan students<sup>28</sup>. Throughout their tertiary studies and beyond, students from RRR backgrounds may also grapple with how their worldview and interests diverge from that of their friends and families who remain in their home community.

### **Challenge C: Raising aspirations for tertiary education**

Students from RRR areas tend to have different education aspirations. For example, students from regional backgrounds are 10 per cent less likely to have plans to attend university than metropolitan students, after controlling for SES<sup>29</sup>.

Students from RRR areas are more likely to choose VET study options. In some cases, differences in aspirations reflect positive choices to pursue employment opportunities in particular occupations or industries relevant to the needs of their local communities.

In other cases, however, it may reflect negative student perceptions of their prospects of getting into a university or successfully completing a university degree. One reason may be less exposure to role models who have obtained higher-level qualifications. The proportion of people in major cities holding a university degree is approximately double that in regional areas, and triple that of people in remote areas<sup>30</sup>. Furthermore, there is a tendency for regional communities to focus more on helping young people find employment rather than considering higher education as a pathway<sup>31</sup>.

Another factor influencing university participation is that most RRR students do not live near universities as they grow up. A study of rural and regional student experiences found that where a regional university has a physical presence in a particular location, there was an increase in educational aspirations and overall participation in higher education in the regional areas surrounding the campus<sup>32</sup>. The expectations of parents also differs between metropolitan and regional areas<sup>33</sup>.

A further factor is potential lack of information of available study and career options, and opportunities to pursue relevant pathways into higher level VET and higher education courses.

### **Challenge D: RRR students often face multiple forms of disadvantage**

Other characteristics that are associated with lower access and attainment at a tertiary level compound the effects of regional disadvantage<sup>34</sup>. Regional students are more likely to be from low SES households, from Indigenous backgrounds, older, studying part time, and/or the first in their family to attend university<sup>35</sup>. Each of these characteristics presents its own challenges, but they combine to make studying more difficult for students from these equity groups. For example, some research notes that socio-economic status is a critical factor influencing the higher education participation and attainment of regional students<sup>36</sup>. Other studies propose that particular attention should be paid to male students in regional and remote locations, because their under-representation in higher education is more severe than that of the female regional and remote population<sup>37</sup>.

The factors that primarily affect equity cohorts such as financial stress, isolation, and work commitments further harm the emotional health and wellbeing of regional students. Students from equity groups are significantly more likely than metropolitan students to cite emotional health as a reason for considering deferring or withdrawing from university (84 per cent and 66 per cent respectively)<sup>38</sup>.

## **Challenge E: Attracting people and jobs to RRR areas**

Australia has a number of thriving regional universities and campuses, that not only contribute to developing skilled workers to drive the economy in their communities, but also national prosperity more generally. Graduates of regional universities tend to enjoy better employment and economic outcomes. After graduation 76 per cent of regional graduates have full-time work, compared to 71 per cent in the cities<sup>39</sup>, with many working in regional areas<sup>40</sup>. Moreover, during their studies, students at regional universities report high levels of satisfaction with their university experience<sup>41</sup>.

Despite these better outcomes, regional communities sometimes struggle to attract university students and graduates. Addressing this challenge by strengthening regional universities could create a virtuous cycle where more people and potential entrepreneurs are attracted to RRR communities, which in turn may attract more employers and job opportunities to the area.

Further strengthening the capacity of regional universities and supporting their research capabilities is part of this challenge. Attracting more students and researchers to regional areas has the potential to drive growth in high-skilled jobs, and so reduce the disparity in post-secondary educational attainment between people in RRR and metropolitan areas. Universities Australia has highlighted the role of universities in growing and keeping jobs in regional areas. From 2004 to 2011, start-ups contributed 90 per cent of Australia's net positive job creation, with university graduates founding 80 per cent of Australian start-ups<sup>42</sup>. More high-skilled jobs in RRR areas would mean fewer university graduates having to move to metropolitan areas to work in the area of their university degree. Currently, young people from regional backgrounds who complete a university degree are twice as likely to migrate to cities as those who complete a certificate level qualification<sup>43</sup>.

Australia's highest ranked research universities are generally located in metropolitan areas. Global university rankings involve a range of methodological issues and do not necessarily provide a reliable indicator of capacity to meet the educational and other needs of students from RRR areas. Student and academic perceptions of their reputations nevertheless play a role in the net movement of people from RRR areas. While a range of factors complicate international comparisons of regional universities, examples from the United Kingdom and the United States also highlight the role that regional universities can play in attracting people to their local communities.

Another opportunity for regional education providers is to attract more international students. In 2017-18, international education contributed \$32.4 billion to the Australian economy<sup>44</sup>. International students studying in regional Australia report higher levels of satisfaction and community engagement than international students in metropolitan areas do. They also have lower living and study costs<sup>45</sup>. Despite the benefits of studying in RRR areas, 97 per cent of international students study in Australia's major cities<sup>46</sup>.

### **Putting the challenge in context.**

United Kingdom and United States have top ranked universities in regional areas. In the United Kingdom, famous examples are Oxford and Cambridge, but there are highly regarded universities in other areas such as Warwick and Durham. In the United States, top universities like Cornell (Ithaca, New York), University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, Michigan) and Dartmouth (Hanover, New Hampshire) are located in regional cities and towns. By attracting students and researchers to their towns, these universities support local jobs and sprout businesses that helped grow the local economy and population over time. While some of these university towns have grown to have larger populations than most Australian regional centres, they provide insights into how universities can influence their local communities and help drive significant growth in the local population over time.

## **Challenge F: Implementing and monitoring a national strategy**

The National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy will provide a framework to address the challenges that prevent people from RRR communities from accessing and completing tertiary education.

Australia is a large and sparsely populated country and there is a complex range of different systems and players, including various levels of government, involved in the delivery of education services. Australian communities and industries also have their own particular education and training needs, meaning different approaches are needed for different contexts. Individual communities, industries, the education sector and governments have supported a range of initiatives over recent years that have made a positive difference and have helped to lift access and attainment rates. However, achieving greater national coherence across these activities remains an ongoing challenge.

Consequently, as well as identifying practical immediate actions and long-term strategies that can make a real difference to outcomes for students and communities, it will be important to consider how to implement new initiatives effectively in a way that complements current effort, and how to best monitor the success of the Strategy.

To bring together this effort and oversee implementation of the Strategy, the Halsey Review floated the idea of appointing an independent Commissioner, similar to the approach taken in health with the establishment of a National Rural Health Commissioner. Other issues to be considered as part of implementation arrangements include what goals and targets should be set, for example around educational attainment, over the life of the Strategy.



## 4. KEY QUESTIONS

The Regional Education Expert Advisory Group is seeking responses to the following key questions. Specifically, we are looking for practical steps to overcome the five challenges facing students from RRR backgrounds.

### **Challenge A: There are fewer study options available in RRR areas**

1. What opportunities exist to expand options for further study in RRR areas?
2. What potential is there for universities, vocational training providers and other service providers to better work together in RRR areas, including opportunities to expand service offerings and better support articulation between VET and higher education?

### **Challenge B: Relocating RRR students face significant financial, emotional and social challenges**

3. What financial supports work best for students from RRR backgrounds, including those who choose to relocate?
4. What forms of support might be useful in helping students from RRR backgrounds to continue with their tertiary study?
5. How can universities assist RRR students to feel like they belong on their campus?

### **Challenge C: Raising aspirations for tertiary education**

6. What actions would help to raise aspirations and support informed career choices for students from RRR backgrounds?

### **Challenge D: RRR often experience multiple forms of disadvantage**

7. What practical steps can be taken to support RRR students who experience multiple forms of disadvantage?
8. How can we better support Indigenous people from RRR areas to access and succeed in tertiary education?

### **Challenge E: Attracting people and jobs to RRR areas**

9. How can tertiary education providers further stimulate economic growth in RRR areas?
10. What actions would further strengthen and increase the attractiveness of regional universities?
11. What policies would attract more metropolitan and international students to study at RRR areas, including regional universities and campuses?

### **Challenge F: Implementing and monitoring a national strategy**

12. Would there be value in establishing a National Regional Education Commissioner to oversee the Strategy and, if so, what should their role be?
13. How should success be measured? What goals and targets, including for tertiary education attainment, should be considered both at a national and individual community level?

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**INDIGENOUS EDUCATION STRATEGY**  
(revised May 2017)

Previous versions:

Indigenous Education Strategy 2012 -2016

Indigenous Education Strategy 2008-2011

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## PREAMBLE

*Education has arguably been one of the most successful areas of Indigenous development over the past 30 years with steadily increasing numbers of Indigenous students attaining higher education.*

*But the rate of improvement has now faltered. Educational systems are failing Indigenous people at all levels in terms of equitable participation and achievement.*

*There is evidence that basic skills such as being able to read, write and do simple arithmetic are in decline, particularly in rural and remote communities...Retention rates to Year 10...have declined at three times the rate of the general population...Indigenous retention rates to Year 12 are also much lower...*

*If these disturbing trends are not arrested it will make the task of achieving higher jobs growth for Indigenous Australians even more difficult*

*(Mr. Djerrkura, Report to the United Nation Human Rights Committee, 1999:22-23).*

Education plays a major role in the socialisation of children and young adults and is one of the means by which the cultural norms and values of a society are transmitted from one generation to the next. Thus, education reinforces and naturalises societal concepts and expectations, while teaching a child to conform to the roles and status society deems acceptable for that individual or group. The Western education system also serves the function of equipping children and young adults with the knowledge and skills considered valuable and necessary for employment in a progressive and competitive capitalist society such as Australia. However, the types of skills and depth of knowledge taught have been largely determined by dominant societal attitudes and expectations in relation to class, race, age and gender.

The history of Aboriginal education since colonisation has been one of marginalisation and limited access, largely based on the ideologies of Social Darwinism and the twin European policies of 'civilising' and 'Christianising'. Western education was used, and at times is still used, to negate the cultures, languages and identity of Indigenous children. Access to education for Indigenous students prior to the 1960s was restricted by the institutional racism embedded in government policies such as the Aborigines Protection Acts, operational in all Australian States and Territories from 1909. Under these policies the education of Indigenous Australians was limited to the development of rudimentary skills and knowledge deemed by the dominant society as appropriate for positions of domestic and rural servitude.

Educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians showed improvement after the 1967 Referendum, with a significant increase in Indigenous tertiary enrolments from the 1980s to late 1990s following the dismantling of policies deemed contrary to the Racial Discrimination Act (1975). However, the past decade has witnessed a marked decline in improvement in educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians across all educational sectors, particularly in rural and remote Australia. Many Indigenous students are leaving school poorly prepared relative to their non-Indigenous counterparts. An increased number of Indigenous students are disengaging with school prior to reaching or completing Year 10. Relatively few Indigenous students are remaining at school to complete Year 11 and Year 12 or its vocational equivalent and even less obtain the educational outcomes necessary to gain entry into University programs.

Educational outcomes such as this perpetuate the intergenerational cycle of social and economic disadvantage experienced by many Indigenous Australians by limiting the post-school options and life choices of Indigenous students. Charles Sturt University (CSU) acknowledges that the institution has a significant role and responsibility in enhancing educational and socio-economic outcomes for Indigenous Australians, both within the region of Charles Sturt University and nationally. The University recognises that to improve

## Indigenous educational outcomes:

*“An integrated policy approach is needed to advance Indigenous higher education, for the issues are systematic...Equal attention must be given to, among other things, the recruitment and support of Indigenous students, the recruitment, support and promotion of Indigenous staff, and the building and strengthening of Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Research. Urgent action is needed in all these areas if a positive cycle of participation in higher education, which breeds further participation in higher education, is to be established”.* (Improving Indigenous Outcomes and Enhancing Indigenous Culture and Knowledge in Australian Higher Education, Report of the Inaugural Indigenous Higher Education Conference, 2005)

# 1. Vision

Charles Sturt University (CSU) is a university of the land and people of its regions. True to the character of regional Australia we have gumption, we have soul and we collaborate with others.

We develop holistic, far-sighted people who help their communities grow and flourish.

Acknowledging the culture and insight of Indigenous Australians, CSU's ethos is described by this phrase from the Wiradjuri, the traditional custodians of the land of our original campuses:

*'yindyamarra winhanganha'*  
(*'the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in'*)

# 2. Mission

The Mission of the Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy is to align the University's Indigenous Education policies and activities with national Indigenous Education policies, recommendations and guidelines to provide the University with a framework and guidelines for the development of a systematic and coordinated whole-of-institution approach to the implementation of the University's Vision and Key Objectives for Indigenous Education. In particular, Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy aligns with the following policies and guidelines:

## ***University Australia Indigenous Education Strategy 2017-2020***

University Australia's Indigenous Education Strategy (2017) acknowledging that universities have responsibilities to Australia's Indigenous people and reflects the right of self-determination by working in partnership with Indigenous communities. The strategy contains a number of initiatives that seek to:

- *Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in higher education as students, as graduates and as academic and research staff;*
- *Increase the engagement of non-Indigenous people with Indigenous knowledge, culture and educational approaches; and*
- *Improve the university environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.*

The KPI's, outlined in section 4.2 of the Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy 2017, were revised in May 2017 to align with the University Australia Indigenous Education Strategy.

## ***Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People 2012 (Behrendt Report)***

The Behrendt Report examines how improving higher education amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will contribute to nation building and help reduce Indigenous disadvantage. The Report considers:

- *Achieving parity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, researchers and university staff;*
- *Best practice and opportunities for change inside universities and other higher education providers;*
- *The effectiveness of existing Commonwealth Government programs;*
- *The recognition and equivalence of Indigenous knowledge in higher education.*

### ***National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (NATSIEP)***

The NATSIEP forms the foundation of all Indigenous education programs in Australia. The policy has been endorsed by the Australian Government as well as all State and Territory governments. NATSIEP has 21 long term goals and 4 major goals designed to improve access and educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians. The four major goals inform the Charles Sturt Indigenous Education Strategy. They are:

1. *Involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in educational decision-making;*
2. *Equality of access to education services;*
3. *Equity of education participation; and*
4. *Equitable and appropriate educational outcomes.*

### ***Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council***

The Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council of Australia Strategic Agenda (2006) identified seven priority areas which inform and guide the recommendations of the Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy. These seven priority areas are:

1. *Encourage universities to work with schools and TAFE colleges and other registered training organisations to build pathways and raise the levels of aspiration and confidence of Indigenous students;*
2. *Develop a concerted strategy to improve the level of Indigenous undergraduate enrolment;*
3. *Improve the level of Indigenous postgraduate enrolment, enhance Indigenous research and increase the number of Indigenous researchers;*
4. *Improve the rates of success, retention and completion for Indigenous students;*
5. *Enhance the prominence and status of Indigenous culture, knowledge and studies on campus;*
6. *Increase the number of Indigenous people working in Australian universities; and*
7. *Improve the participation of Indigenous people in university governance and management.*

### ***Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)***

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) conducted its Quality Audit of Charles Sturt University during 2004. AUQA made many commendations, affirmations and recommendations to Charles Sturt University. Of particular relevance to this Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy is *Recommendation 1*:

*AUQA recommends that in responding to cross-portfolio issues the University has identified as fundamentally important to the institution, Charles Sturt University management assign responsibility for formulating and implementing a coordinated strategy to address each issue including guiding the various elements of the University in the roles they are expected to play in the solution.*

### ***Australian Universities Quality Agency (2006) – ‘Serving the Cause of Indigenous Issues: Thematic Analysis of the Institutional Audit Reports of AUQA’***

In September 2006, AUQA published the “*Serving the Cause of Indigenous Issues: Thematic Analysis of the Institutional Audit Reports of AUQA*”. The Report provides a detailed analysis of the Indigenous Education *policies and activities* of Australia’s 38 Higher Education Institutions and identifies examples of best practice which are relevant to the Mission of Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy, including:

1. *Planning – making a commitment, monitoring and co-ordination;*
2. *Support – advisory committees, structure, and support service;*
3. *Centre of Knowledge;*
4. *Curriculum – Indigenous subjects, enhancing reconciliation and embedding Indigenous perspectives;*
5. *Outreach – targeting school students, flexible learning, interaction with community and Indigenous employment; and*
6. *Research – Indigenous research, models and training.*



### ***Charles Sturt University Act 1989***

The Charles Sturt University Education Strategy aligns with Sections 7(1) and 7(2)(a) of the Constitution and Functions of the *Charles Sturt University Act 1989*. Sections 7(1) and 7(2)(a) are:

*7(1) The object of the University is the promotion, within the limits of the University's resources, of scholarship, research, free inquiry, the interaction of research and teaching, and academic excellence.*

*7(2)(a) The provision of facilities for education and research of university standard, having particular regard to the needs and aspirations of the residents of western and south western New South Wales.*

### ***Charles Sturt University Review 2004***

The 2004 Charles Sturt University review of Indigenous education services made a number of *key recommendations* relevant to Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy including:

*Establish a Centre for Indigenous Studies to focus on Indigenous education, teaching and research;*

*Expand Indigenous community consultation and input for specific activities and proposals identified by the University; and*

*Conduct an audit of Indigenous studies, perspectives, administrative procedures and issues to inform the implementation of the Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy.*

### ***Charles Sturt University Strategy and Plans (various)***

The Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy reflects and enables CSU's Strategic Vision, Values, Mission and Objectives. These are available [here](#).

## **3. Values**

Derived from our ethos, CSU's values are to be insightful, inclusive, impactful and inspiring.



- **Insightful:** We act respectfully and perceptively to seek to understand why people behave the way they do. Through an open-minded approach we reveal peoples underlying attitudes, beliefs and motivations.



- **Inclusive:** We aim to be easy, warm and welcoming. By involving others we are a stronger collective force and we work collaboratively to develop and deliver solutions that benefit everyone in our community.



- **Impactful:** We focus on outcomes and behave in a consistent and constructive manner to enhance our impact on those around us. We value the individual roles of those around us in supporting our students and communities and we take learnings from each of our experiences and have the gumption and tenacity to find a way past difficulties and obstructions.



- **Inspiring:** We drive and lead change and evolution by being creative in our thinking and rigorous in our approach, and we engage and motivate our students and communities to also proactively build innovation and capacity into their lives, careers and industries.

The key values which form the foundation of the Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy were drawn from early versions of the University's Strategic Vision, Values, Mission and Objectives. They remain relevant to the current University Strategy:

*Building skills and knowledge in our regions. We offer choice and flexibility to students and work hand in hand with our industries and communities in teaching, research and engagement. Growing from our historical roots, we share our knowledge and expertise as a significant regional export industry and we bring strength and learning from this back to our regions.*

*We are a market-orientated University and express our intent through our goal to be the dominant provider of higher education for on-campus students in our regions and in Australian online higher education.*

## **4. Key Objectives, Performance Indicators and Recommendations**

The Key Objectives and Recommendations made within the Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy align Charles Sturt University's Vision, Mission and Strategic Plans with national Indigenous education policies, recommendations and guidelines. The Recommendations provide Charles Sturt University with a framework for the systematic development and implementation of a coordinated whole-of-institution approach to addressing the University's Key Objectives for Indigenous Education.

### **4.1 Key Objectives from 2008 (revised in May 2017 in bold)**

Implementation of the Recommendations contained within this document fulfils the 9 Key Objectives of the Charles Sturt Indigenous Education Strategy to:

#### **Key Objective 1**

*Promote and enhance national and regional reconciliation including the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) by the beginning of 2018.*

#### **Key Objective 2**

*Make Indigenous people, culture and knowledge a valued and visible aspect of the life and culture of the University and its campuses.*

#### **Key Objective 3**

*Establish Charles Sturt University as the preferred higher education provider for Indigenous students and Indigenous Education, particularly from our regional footprints.*

#### **Key Objective 4**

*Improve the four key indicators of Indigenous educational outcomes: access, participation, retention and success.*

#### **Key Objective 5**

*Incorporate Indigenous Australian content into all of the University's undergraduate course offerings, and embed related descriptors into the University's Graduate Attributes.*

#### **Key Objective 6**

*Increase Charles Sturt University's research output relating to Indigenous specific issues by developing a cross-discipline and divisional scholarship of Indigenous learning, teaching and research, based upon Indigenous community involvement and University staff commitment to the advancement of the principles of social justice to achieve equality and self-determination for Indigenous Australians.*

#### **Key Objective 7**

*Enhance the profile of Charles Sturt University as the preferred employer of Indigenous people through strengthened programs and initiatives specifically designed to attract and support Indigenous staff.*

#### **Key Objective 8**

*Develop and advance the professional profiles and research skills of the University's Indigenous staff through extended opportunities for professional development and advancement.*

#### **Key Objective 9**

*Develop clear and accountable governance and management structures to develop, implement and monitor progress in achieving this Indigenous Education Strategy.*

## **4.2 Key Performance Indicators from 2008 with 2017 revisions (in bold)**

- KPI 1.** Charles Sturt University to increase the total number of Indigenous Australian students participating in higher education at Charles Sturt University to at least 3% by 2015 and **thereafter at a rate greater than 50% above growth rate of non-Indigenous student enrolments.**
- KPI 2.** All Charles Sturt University undergraduate programs incorporate Indigenous Australian content by **2020 in accordance with [the Indigenous Australian Content in CSU Courses Policy](#).**
- KPI 3.** Charles Sturt University **continues to build a** national and international reputation for its scholarship and success in embedding cultural competence within all its undergraduate professional programs.
- KPI 4.** **Under the Charles Sturt University Research Narrative (revised 2017) deliver sustainable research programs that will empower Indigenous people through high-quality education and ground breaking research. The Research Narrative will underpin strategies to enable Indigenous health and education research, Indigenous self-determination research and a focus on Indigenous knowledge and connection to Country. The research programs will be inclusive of Indigenous researcher staff and Higher Degree by Research students, and non-Indigenous researchers with expertise that can strengthen these focus areas.**
- KPI 5.** Consistent with the Charles Sturt University Indigenous Employment Strategy the University increase the number of Indigenous staff employed in continuing and training positions at Charles Sturt University to at least 3% by **2017 and specifically beyond 2% for Indigenous Academic Staff.**

## **4.3 Performance against Recommendations from previous IES**

The following Recommendations from previous versions of the Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy enable the nine Key Objectives and the five Key Performance Indicators and align with the Mission, Values and Objectives of the University's Strategy and the recommendations of the AUQA, IHEAC and Australian Vice Chancellor's reports. The Recommendations are grouped according to their focus and should be read in context with the broader discussion and recommendations contained within this document.

The status of each of the original recommendation is listed in the table below. Note that terminology and organisational structures identified were those current in 2008. As the intent of the recommendation is clear in 2017 a decision was made to adhere to the language or the original recommendations, although:

- The Centre for Indigenous Studies is now the School of Indigenous Australian Studies
- Indigenous Student Services is now the Indigenous Student Centre(s)
- The Centre for Research and Graduate Training is now the Research Office
- The Division of Learning and Teaching Services is now the Division of Student Learning

**Performance against Recommendations**

	<b>Status (May 2017)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<i>Institutional Development</i>		
<b>Recommendation 1</b> The Vice-Chancellor endorses a Statement of Reconciliation on behalf of the Charles Sturt University community.	Complete	Refer section 5 of this document.
<b>Recommendation 2</b> Charles Sturt University Planning and Budget Committee oversee the development and implementation of a Reconciliation Action Plan based upon the principles outlined in the endorsed Reconciliation Statement and the Principles, Values and Recommendations of the Charles Sturt Indigenous Education Strategy.	Incomplete	Expected to be completed by February 2018.
<b>Recommendation 3</b> The Charles Sturt University Reconciliation Action Plan is registered with Reconciliation Australia.	Incomplete	Expected to be completed by May 2018.
<b>Recommendation 4</b> The Charles Sturt University, University Council, appoints an Indigenous member to University Council.	Complete	CSU has a member of Council who is Indigenous.
<b>Recommendation 5</b> The Vice Chancellor establishes an Indigenous Education Strategy Coordinating Group to provide advice and guidance to the University in ensuring cultural appropriateness, accountability and transparency.	Complete	Indigenous Education Strategy Steering Committee currently chaired by DVC RDI.
<b>Recommendation 6</b> The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Administration) and Director of Student Services formally change the name of the Indigenous Support Units to Indigenous Student Services.	Complete	Now called 'Indigenous Student Centre(s)'
<b>Recommendation 7</b> The Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice President (Administration), work with relevant Divisions, the Centre for Indigenous Studies, Deans and Indigenous Student Services to: a) Establish an "Elders in Residence" program at each campus which promotes and legitimises the role of Elders within the learning community;	Ongoing	Recommendation 7 will be reviewed in Q3 2017 to better reflect current and future directions.

<p>b) Provide facilities on each campus for the establishment of a Community Meeting Place;</p> <p>c) Construct murals or other visual displays of Indigenous art and culture on campus;</p> <p>d) Develop cultural protocols, codes of conduct and policies to guide the University in its engagement with Indigenous peoples and communities;</p> <p>e) Acknowledge Indigenous heritage and traditional ownership and custodianship of the land through observance of a ‘Welcome to Country’ by traditional Elders at University ceremonies and events and an ‘Acknowledgement of Country’ in a prominent location on major University documents and marketing materials and University websites; and</p> <p>f) Name University spaces in local language and establish on-campus community events, including celebrations for NAIDOC and Reconciliation week’s and commemoration of National Sorry Day/Journey of Healing Day.</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation 8</b>  The Indigenous Student Centres of Charles Sturt University, in partnership with Divisions and faculties, lead in evidence-based policy development with a view to improving access participation, retention and success rates of Indigenous Students, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improving and maintaining accurate and accessible data on these key performance indicators;</li> <li>- Investigating and identifying ways in which financial and other assistance to Indigenous students may contribute to higher retention and success; and</li> <li>- Identifying the risk factors and vulnerabilities that contribute to Indigenous student lack of academic success and withdrawal from enrolment.</li> </ul>	Complete	
<p><b>Recommendation 9</b>  The Indigenous Student Services of Charles Sturt University investigate and identify ways in which financial and other assistance for Indigenous students may contribute to higher retention and success, including consideration of scholarships for full or part time students who are ineligible for other financial support.</p>	Complete (ongoing)	
<p><b>Recommendation 10</b>  The Indigenous Student Services and Centre for Indigenous Studies establish a mentoring and role model scheme for Indigenous students.</p>	Complete (ongoing)	‘Strong Moves’ program.

<p><b>Recommendation 11</b> The Director of Student Services, in cooperation with Human Resources, provides staff of the Indigenous Student Services with opportunities and support to further their academic qualifications, research skills and profiles.</p>	Complete (ongoing)	Indigenous Staff Study Support Scheme.
<p><b>Recommendation 12</b> Indigenous Students Services strengthen and extend their partnerships with secondary schools and providers of vocational education and training, in order to increase the entry of Indigenous secondary school leavers and vocational education students into Charles Sturt University courses.</p>	Complete (ongoing)	‘Danygamalanah’ and ‘Strong Moves’ programs.
<p><b>Recommendation 14</b> Charles Sturt University provide funding for the ongoing development of an Outreach marketing and student recruitment program.</p>	Complete (ongoing)	HEPP funded Future Moves programs targets schools with high Indigenous student populations.
<p><b>Recommendation 29</b> Human Resources provide support and financial incentives, including supporting time release through earnings replacement, for Indigenous people in current employment at Charles Sturt University who are undertaking postgraduate studies.</p>	Complete (ongoing)	HR support and incentives are available to all staff however there are targeted programs e.g. Indigenous Staff Study Support Scheme.
<p><b>Recommendation 33</b> Charles Sturt University Planning and Budget Committee, in collaboration with the Indigenous Employment Coordinator, establish study scholarships and schemes to encourage and support the ongoing career development of Indigenous staff.</p>	Complete (ongoing)	Indigenous Staff Study Support Scheme.
<p><b>Recommendation 34</b> Faculties in collaboration with the Centre for Indigenous Studies and, Indigenous Employment Coordinator, develop programs to provide mentoring and specialised leadership training for Indigenous academics.</p>	Ongoing	Indigenous Academic Fellowship under review with a trial in one faculty being undertaken.
<p><b>Recommendation 35</b> Contract and ongoing positions are to be identified for Indigenous Trainees as they approach successful completion of their traineeships.</p>	Incomplete (ongoing)	

<p><b>Recommendation 36</b> Central Funds are to be made available to create the position of Research and Policy Officer within the Centre for Indigenous Studies. This position will service the Vice Chancellor's Indigenous Education Strategy Coordinating Group.</p>	Complete	Position changed with changing requirements
<i>Courses, Learning and Teaching</i>		
<p><b>Recommendation 13</b> Faculties in cooperation with the Centre for Indigenous Studies provide multiple entry and exit points and innovative undergraduate and postgraduate courses which specifically meet the employment needs of mature-age Indigenous peoples, and recognises the prior learning and work experience of Indigenous non-school leaving students</p>	Ongoing	
<p><b>Recommendation 15</b> Academic Senate implement policy requiring the incorporation of Indigenous Australian content as an assessable component of all Charles Sturt University undergraduate programs. The incorporation of Indigenous Australian content is to take place at the next major course review with incorporation across all undergraduate courses to be fully implemented by 2015.</p>	Ongoing	<p><a href="#">Indigenous Australian Content in Courses Policy</a></p> <p>Further consideration is required in relation to how this recommendation is addressed for new course proposals.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 16</b> The Charles Sturt University Degree Initiative Committee, in consultation and negotiation with the Centre for Indigenous Studies, review the descriptors of the University's graduate attributes to specify the extent to which Indigenous content is expected to be identified and specified within the graduate attributes profiles of programs and courses offered by the University.</p>	Complete (ongoing)	Completed through the Graduate Learning Outcomes work and the <a href="#">Graduate Attributes Policy</a>
<p><b>Recommendation 17</b> Academic Senate, in collaboration with the Centre for Indigenous Studies, develop a set of curriculum guidelines identifying the broad intentions of Indigenous content and issues to be considered, and that these be included within the guidelines for Course and Program review and Course and Program Development templates.</p>	Complete	<p><a href="#">IBS Submission template</a></p> <p><a href="#">Incorporating Indigenous Australian Content into Undergraduate Awards at CSU: A Guide to Requirements and Process</a></p>



<p><b>Recommendation 18</b> Faculties, as part of the 5-yearly Review process, hold a program specific seminar to explore how the program will address the issues raised within the curriculum guidelines. The seminars should include teaching staff from the program, practitioners from relevant industry or professional contexts, Indigenous participants with appropriate expertise and staff from the Centre for Indigenous Studies.</p>	Ongoing	At CSU Faculties no longer hold regular 5 year reviews. Many Faculties/ Schools have held one or more seminars/ workshops over time.
<p><b>Recommendation 19</b> Academic Senate introduce policy requiring Course and Program Coordinators to comment, within the 5-yearly course and program review report, on how they are addressing the incorporation of Indigenous Australian content in Charles Sturt University undergraduate courses.</p>	Complete	Baseline stage of Smart Learning and through FCC & IBS.
<p><b>Recommendation 20</b> Charles Sturt University to appoint an Indigenous Curriculum and Pedagogy Coordinator located within the Division of Learning and Teaching Services to provide educational design support and advice to Faculties and Schools on the incorporation of Indigenous Australian content</p>	Complete	Also establishment of Gulaay Indigenous Australian Curriculum and Resources team in the Learning Academy in DSL.
<p><b>Recommendation 21</b> Academic staff who teach Indigenous Australian content are expected to hold qualifications in Indigenous Studies or a relevant discipline. Staff without qualifications or equivalent expertise and experience will be expected to gain qualifications or participate in professional learning programs provided by the Centre for Indigenous Studies.</p>	Incomplete	Not implemented (although the ICCP has been implemented).
<p><b>Recommendation 22</b> Existing Indigenous Australian Studies subjects (including Discipline-specific and hybrid) should be referred to the Indigenous Board of Studies for Review. Existing subjects should be assigned to the relevant Centre/School based on the governance principles set out in the Indigenous Education Strategy.</p>	Complete (ongoing)	Still refining processes and support to maximize value of this requirement.
<p><b>Recommendation 23</b> The Education for Practice Institute be provided with two additional fellowships each year to work in collaboration with the Centre for Indigenous Studies on the scholarship of cultural competence for the professions. One of the two fellowships be a designated fellowship for an Indigenous</p>	Complete	Prior to the disestablishment of EFPI.

Australian academic.		
<p><b>Recommendation 24</b> The new Division of Learning and Teaching Services (formerly CELT and LMC) receive additional funding to create an identified Indigenous Australian position, to provide educational design support to academics within the Centre for Indigenous Studies and the Faculties that teach Indigenous Australian content. The Indigenous Educational Designer will develop expertise in the Cultural Competency Pedagogical Framework as well as instructional design and the development of learning materials.</p>	Incomplete	DSL was initially unable to fill the position with an identified Indigenous Australian. At various times since 2008 Indigenous identified Australians have been part of the curriculum support staff.
<p><b>Recommendation 25</b> Staff teaching Indigenous Australian Studies at Charles Sturt University, including hybrid and discipline specific subjects, are supported by a Cultural Competence Pedagogy Network (akin the Professional Experience Network or PEN).</p>	Incomplete	Network no-longer active.
<p><b>Recommendation 26</b> The Centre for Indigenous Studies, Faculties and the Education for Practice Institute develop a Scholarship of Teaching &amp; Learning Project which would provide for an on- going examination of the process of incorporating Indigenous content into undergraduate professional programs across the University.</p>	Incomplete	Some early work undertaken, but not completed and EFPI now disestablished.
<b>Research</b>		
<p><b>Recommendation 27</b> It is recommended that a senior Indigenous research academic be appointed as a member of the Charles Sturt Human Ethics and Research Committee to ensure accountability and cultural appropriateness of Indigenous research.</p>	Complete	Refer clause 6(j) of the <a href="#">HREC Terms of Reference</a> .
<p><b>Recommendation 28</b> The University Ethics and Human Research Committee establish an Indigenous Research Ethics Committee as a sub-committee of the University Ethics and Human Research Committee.</p>	Incomplete	Carefully considered but not adopted. To be further reviewed by the Indigenous Education Steering Group.
<p><b>Recommendation 30</b> The Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice President (Research) provide financial scholarships for Indigenous postgraduate students to encourage enrolment and completion of Doctoral degrees.</p>	Complete (ongoing)	

<p><b>Recommendation 31</b>  The Centre for Research and Graduate Training in collaboration with the Centre for Indigenous Studies develops appropriate policies, protocols and procedures to ensure quality and accountability of all Charles Sturt University Indigenous research. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The establishment of research advisory groups comprising internal and external stakeholders and the development of culturally appropriate acceptable research models;</li> <li>Having an Indigenous researcher on all Indigenous research projects; and</li> <li>Adequate supervision arrangements for Indigenous Research Higher Degree students, including appropriate cultural support.</li> </ul>	<p>Incomplete</p>	<p>Carefully considered but not adopted. To be further reviewed by the Indigenous Education Steering Group.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 32</b>  The Centre for Research and Graduate Training set aside funding for a Problem Focused Research Group in Indigenous Australian Studies, and accept an 'out of session' application to establish a Problem Focused Research Group in Indigenous Australian Studies using the approved guidelines.</p>	<p>Incomplete</p>	<p>Considered but not adopted; and new mechanisms for funding research in place.</p>

## 5. Charles Sturt University Reconciliation Statement

*‘There can be no reconciliation without social justice and there can be no social justice without reconciliation’*

*(Mick Dodson, National Reconciliation Convention, Melbourne 1997)*

*‘As sites of critical learning, universities are powerful agents for social change and have a responsibility to provide an environment free from racism in all of its forms’*

*(Wright, J 2002, ‘Apartheid: Australian Style’)*

### **Recognition. Acknowledgement. Responsibility and Commitment**

Charles Sturt University is committed to the process of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and recognises the particular role and responsibility it plays in promoting social justice and human rights for all of this country’s First Nations. This statement provides Charles Sturt University with the blueprint for the development and implementation of a Reconciliation Action Plan which will align with the values, vision and mission of the Charles Sturt University Strategy and Plans and the Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy. Consultation towards completion of a Reconciliation Action Plan will commence in May 2017.

#### ***Charles Sturt University recognises and acknowledges:***

- The diversity and unique position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners and custodians of Australia and the islands of the Torres Strait, in accordance with local Indigenous laws and customs.
- That connection to the land sustains contemporary Indigenous cultures, languages, art, spirituality, laws and customs.
- The long-term and continuing impact of colonisation upon the lives and futures of our First Nations’ people.
- The fundamental importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to the heritage and identity of Australia and the valuable and dynamic contribution of Indigenous people and cultures to the community and life of the University.
- The human right of Indigenous Australian peoples to self-determination, to equitable participation in the community and University and equitable access to resources and services.
- The significance of the University’s role in the reconciliation process in building an informed and mature society which acknowledges the past, understands the quintessential connection between the past and present, and is committed to ethical action, social justice and human rights.
- That reconciliation in practice is a shared responsibility requiring commitment to a whole-of-institution approach and active engagement with the Indigenous community.
- The Key Performance Indicators and Recommendations of the Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy be reported to Reconciliation Australia in the form of a Reconciliation Action Plan, and the institutional performance against the KPIs and recommendation be reported to Reconciliation Australia on an annual basis.

## 6. Indigenous Education at Charles Sturt University

*Indigenous Australians comprise 6.98% of the total population of the geographical region serviced by Charles Sturt University, however our Indigenous student population is 3.3% of our total student population. This under-representation is largely a reflection of the long term socio-economic and educational disadvantage affecting many Indigenous communities and families today.*

*This is a social justice and equity issue which Charles Sturt University is committed to overcoming.*

Charles Sturt University was founded in 1989 and provides access to higher education across central, western and south-western NSW and north-eastern Victoria. In the years since its establishment, the University has grown into a multi-campus institution with campus locations at Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Canberra, Dubbo, Goulburn, Orange Wagga Wagga and Port Macquarie.

The State of NSW has the highest population of Indigenous Australians in the country. The Charles Sturt University campuses of Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo and Wagga Wagga are built upon the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri Nation, the largest Indigenous Nation of Aboriginal Australia. The University's inland catchment area extends into the country of the Kamilaroi Nation in the north east, the Murrawarri, Ngemba and Barkandji Nations in the north west, the Nyampa and Wangkamarra Nations in the far west. The campus at Port Macquarie on the NSW Central Coast is in the traditional land of the Birapai Nation. The geographical footprint served by Charles Sturt University's main campuses is home to approximately 33,000 Indigenous people.

### 6.1 Indigenous student access, participation, retention and success

*'Clearly, while Indigenous participation in higher education has increased [in recent years], Indigenous people [remain] markedly over-represented at the lowest end of the course continuum and under-represented at the upper levels'*

*(Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, „Indigenous Participation in Higher education: Culture, Choice and Capital Theory“ June 2006)*

The key indicators of successful higher educational outcomes for Indigenous students can be measured according to the level of Indigenous access to higher education, their participation and retention in a higher education award and successful completion and graduation from their award. As well, a key indicator of successful higher educational outcomes for Indigenous students is engagement across the full spectrum of awards, i.e., Doctoral, and Postgraduate as well as Undergraduate and pathways.

#### 6.1.1 The National Picture

Nationally, the participation rate for Indigenous students in higher education rose by 93% (compared with 47 per cent growth for all domestic students), from 8,330 in 2005 to 16,062 in 2015 (*Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2017*). In 2015 Indigenous students represented 1.5% of domestic students in higher education, up from 1.2% in 2005. Although this is a noteworthy improvement, National data also shows that Indigenous students are more than twice as likely to leave their studies, with 44% citing financial difficulties as the key driver for their decision (*Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2017*). This is important for Indigenous communities and Australian society in the knowledge that Indigenous University graduates have very high levels of employment, and that Indigenous commencing salaries are, on average, higher than for non-Indigenous graduates (2016 Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT)).

Although the Indigenous participation rate has increased, it remains significantly below the level

needed to achieve parity. Key reports have identified the parity rate to be 2.2%, based upon the proportion of Indigenous people in the population that is aged between 15 and 64 years (Behrendt et al, 2015; Bradley et al, 2008). In their comprehensive review of participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in higher education, Wilks and Wilson (2015), highlight the need to approach parity from both levels of participation, *and* levels of success. This is a key element as the most recent Higher Education data released by the government, shows award course completions for all domestic students in 2015 was 217,928, and award course completions for Indigenous students in 2015 was 2,190. That is, while 1.5% of domestic students are Indigenous, only 1% of award completions are Indigenous.

Australian Universities have collectively committed to significantly lift University Indigenous enrolment and completion rates setting “*a target of equal success and completion rates for Indigenous students to non-Indigenous students in the same fields of study over the next decade*” (Universities Australia, 2017). The release of the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2017-2020 has involved a commitment by all Universities to actions that reflect a whole of University approach to Indigenous student access, participation and success, including:

- *maintain institutional growth rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ enrolment that are at least 50 per cent above the growth rate of non-Indigenous student enrolment, and ideally 100 per cent above;*
- *aim for retention and success rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students equal to those of domestic non-Indigenous students in the same fields of study by 2025;*
- *aim to achieve equal completion rates by field of study by 2028;*
- *include Indigenous higher education, research and employment as priority areas in core policy documents, including institutional strategic and business plans;*
- *have Indigenous Research Strategies in place by 2018;*
- *ensure that implementation of these plans and policies is devolved through the university’s faculties, schools and units;*
- *ensure that additional workload expected of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is recognised in workload planning and in performance assessments and promotions processes;*
- *build robust, respectful and collaborative partnerships between themselves and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that they serve;*
- *take a community leadership role in promoting Indigenous higher education and building opportunities for wider community engagement in it;*
- *have current executive staff and all new senior staff complete cross-cultural training programs from 2018; and*
- *have processes that ensure all students will encounter and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural content as integral parts of their course of study, by 2020.*

### 6.1.2 Indigenous Student Outcomes at Charles Sturt University

CSU Indigenous student access, participation and success has been reported in detail in the publically available CSU Indigenous Education Statements (most recent three years available here <https://www.csu.edu.au/unistats/resources> ). The statement for 2016 reports the following enrolment data.

With non-award and award. (SPI data matched to government data)	2015	2016
CSU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:	904	1121
CSU Domestic Non Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	32688	34266
<b>Percentage Indigenous students</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>

Indigenous Australians comprise 6.98% of the total population of the geographical region serviced by Charles Sturt University (2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics), as opposed to 2.8% for the whole of NSW. It is estimated that the CSU footprint ‘university aged’ population (i.e., 15-59 years) is 6.58%, or 19,116 people. Therefore, given the Indigenous population levels of our footprint, it seems reasonable for CSU to be aspiring to participation levels that are significantly greater than either the NSW or the National average.

Of importance, is that National completion data shows that for the last two years CSU has had the highest number of Indigenous award course completions in Australia (see table below sourced from data accessed here <https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/2014-award-course-completions> and <https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/2015-award-course-completions> ). As well, the table below shows that CSU Indigenous student completions constitute just over 2% of the CSU domestic student population.

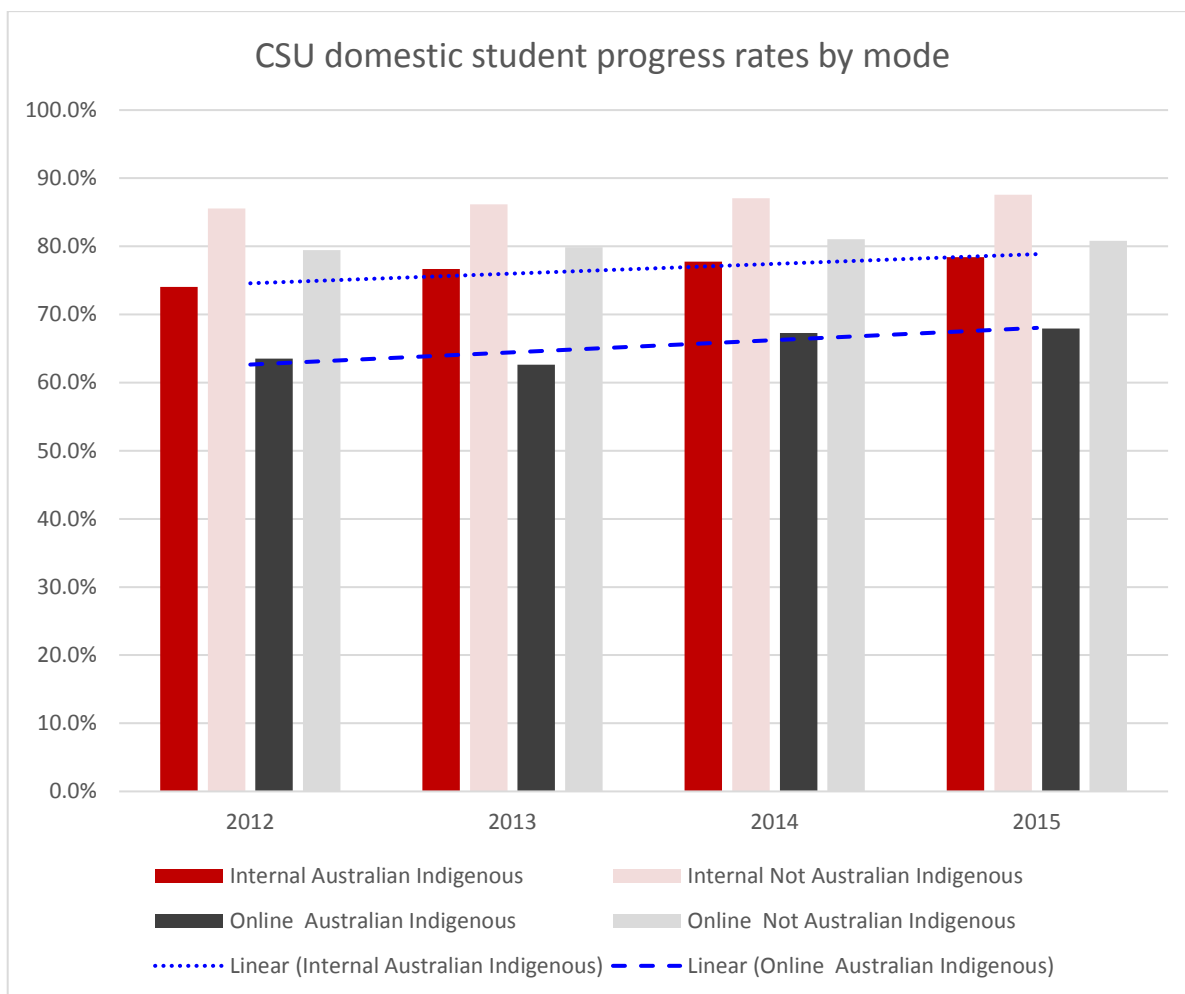
	2014	2015
CSU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students award course completions	6944	6640
CSU Domestic Non Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students award course completions	144	159
<b>Percentage Indigenous students</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>

These completions encompass the range of course levels with 19% at Associate Degree/Diploma level (reflecting our involvement in NSW police training), 53% at Bachelor level, and 28% at Post Graduate level. Indigenous post graduate students include research higher degree students at Masters and Doctoral levels.

Although this data is promising, scrutiny of CSU progress rates indicates there is still work to do. The table below, shows that in spite of the fact that progress rates for Indigenous students improved from 2012 to 2015, the rates for Indigenous students remain 11% below CSU domestic Non Indigenous students.

Progress Rate	2012	2013	2014	2015
Australian Indigenous	69%	70%	73%	73%
Not Australian Indigenous	83%	83%	84%	84%

The chart below shows progress rates for domestic students by mode.



The trend lines show that progress rates for Indigenous students have been improving for both internal and online Indigenous students since 2012. However, as indicated above, the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous student progress rates remains significant, especially for online students. This is important as, congruent with previous years, 64% of our Indigenous students studied online in 2016. As well first year attrition rates are persistently around 8% higher for Indigenous students. Strategies designed to improve the access, participation, retention and success of Indigenous higher education students at Charles Sturt University are outlined in section 6.2 below.



## 6.2 Strategies for Improving Indigenous Student Educational Outcomes at Charles Sturt University

*Charles Sturt University is committed to overcoming the evident disparity in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students of the University.*

*Charles Sturt University acknowledges the impact of Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage and the role and responsibility of the University in addressing this disadvantage through improving Indigenous student access to, and success in, higher education.*

*Charles Sturt University also recognises that Universities, as Western institutions, can be a forbidding environment for Indigenous students and that this can adversely impact upon Indigenous access, participation, retention and success in higher education.*

Since its establishment in 1989, CSU has initiated a number of programs aimed at increasing Indigenous student access to and participation in higher education within the geographical footprint of the institution and beyond.

One of the most fundamental of the ‘pre-conditions’ necessary for achieving long-term sustainable change in Indigenous educational outcomes at CSU is the widening of Indigenous involvement in the life and governance of the University. This requires commitment to a whole of institution approach, including increasing the University’s engagement with Indigenous communities, Indigenousisation of the curriculum, financial assistance and pro-active provision of services tailored to meet the needs of Indigenous students, and the inclusion of Indigenous culture and knowledge as a valued and valued part of University life and decision-making.

CSU has initiated a number strategies and programs to improve Indigenous student access and outcomes. Details regarding these programs can be seen in the CSU’s annual Indigenous Education Statements (available here <https://www.csu.edu.au/unistats/resources> ).

### ***Indigenous Access***

CSU runs programs to enhance aspiration for higher education and access by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Key examples include: Future Moves ***Danygamalanha*** (To Excel); Strong Moves (school children mentoring); and a range of Indigenous Access Programs (such as Indigenous Police Recruiting Our Way – IPROWD).

In 2015, Future Moves had approximately 19,000 points of contact with school students; 17% of these could be identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (i.e., where identification as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander was able to be recorded either through a survey or participation in Danygamalanha events specifically for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students). Please see the CSU Indigenous Education Statements for detailed outcomes related to these programs. We also run an enabling program that is open to all students, the Diploma of General Studies, and raise awareness of Indigenous participation in Higher Education through Indigenous Community University Partnership Grants.

In addition,

- strong community engagement has been built through the Future Moves program and CSU’s Indigenous Student Centres with relevant Indigenous community groups (e.g., AECG, and Landcare)
- Targeted scholarships have been established along with active dissemination of opportunities through access programs

Other strategies recommended for improving the access, participation, retention and success of Indigenous students at Charles Sturt University include:

### ***Indigenous Participation and Success***

CSU has adopted an evidence based approach to pilot and implement strategies to enhance Indigenous student participation and success. The aim is to provide culturally appropriate and needs based programs and strategies designed to effectively address key areas of concern in

relation to Indigenous Education. This includes:

- accountable systems for the early identification of Indigenous students at risk;
- the provision of case management and other relevant support and services;
- the use of tailored learning advice and tutoring; and
- managing support as needed by students.

This final point is important as many Indigenous students are able to succeed without intervention; acknowledging and responding to this is important. Additional important strategies include the promotion of Indigenous cultures and Indigenous community, student and staff achievements.

Planned elements include mentoring, both peer to peer and alumni; enhancement of Indigenous student representation; and the provision of flexible entry requirements for Indigenous students.

Key to our success is the employment of Indigenous managerial, academic and general staff across the institution, including administrative roles in high profile, and first contact roles within Faculty, Divisions and other University offices.

## **7. Toward an Inclusive Curriculum: Incorporating Indigenous Australian Content in Undergraduate Programs**

*“By 2020, universities commit to have plans for, or have already in place, processes that ensure all students will encounter and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural content as integral parts of their course of study. This will give all Australian university graduates in the future the chance to develop their capabilities to work with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities” (Universities Australia, Indigenous Education Strategy 2017-2020, p. 30)*

Graduates of Australian universities play a significant role in addressing and stemming the perpetuation of socio-economic disadvantage of Indigenous Australians. In social and professional contexts, graduates also become leaders in policy and practice; constructing and legitimating values and attitudes in the provision of professional services to Indigenous peoples.

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991) was the first major national Inquiry to document the complexity and severity of the socio-economic disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians. The report questioned the standard and appropriateness of service provision for Indigenous Australians arguing that professionals largely operated within frameworks devoid of knowledge and with limited understandings of Indigenous cultures, worldviews, and histories and the implications for their professional practice.

Since 1969 there has been a strategic focus on developing Indigenous studies pre-service curriculum for professions such as education, health, and social work. Despite this focus, doctors, social workers, psychologists, nurses, police officers, teachers, and other professionals continue to implement policies and practices detrimental to achieving social justice for Indigenous Australians. Strategies and approaches continue to be developed based on limited knowledge and understanding of Indigenous cultures, histories or contemporary realities.

Charles Sturt University is committed to a systematic approach to integrating Indigenous Australian content into all courses of the university. The Incorporating Indigenous Australian Content policy and the establishment of the Indigenous Board of Studies provides a strategic basis from which to govern and monitor the work of faculties and schools in ensuring that professionals graduated by the university have a reflexive framework for understanding their responsibilities to work effectively with Indigenous clients and/or communities. This education should engage students in a critical inquiry into the nature of their profession – its history, assumptions and characteristics, its role in structuring Australian society, and its historical and contemporary engagement with Indigenous communities and Indigenous people. These professional characteristics need to be examined and understood if professionals are to develop an understanding of the social and political contexts of Indigenous peoples’ lives and communities and the roles of the professions in shaping those contexts to become agents of change.

The implementation of policy ensuring that all graduates are provided with the opportunity to develop knowledge, skills, motivation and confidence to be able to work professionally with Indigenous people and communities provides CSU with the foundation upon which to set this higher education institution apart from other universities, being second only to the University of South Australia in implementing such policy.

### **7.1 Cultural Competence: A Pedagogical Framework for Incorporating Indigenous Australian Content**

The University’s *Indigenous Cultural Competence Pedagogy Framework* is based on the Cultural Competence Pedagogical Framework developed from an initial research project conducted by Associate Professor Wendy Nolan and Associate Professor Keith McConnochie in 2004 which

addressed four key questions:

- what is the justification for incorporating required Indigenous Australian content into undergraduate programs?
- what content should be included?
- how should this content vary across professions and disciplines; and,
- what pedagogical strategies are appropriate?

The research included an extensive literature search and a series of focus groups comprising Indigenous and non- Indigenous professionals, academics, Indigenous communities, students, employer groups and other relevant stakeholders. These groups explored the role of professionals in Indigenous contexts to determine the professional knowledge and skill base required to work effectively with, and for, Indigenous Australians. Five broad issues emerged from the research:

1. the significant lack of awareness amongst professionals working with Indigenous Australian clients, cultures and contexts;
2. an absence of specific skills and strategies for working in Indigenous contexts;
3. the culturally specific nature of the assumptions and practices of professions and agencies;
4. the failure of professions to engage in broader issues of justice and human rights, including advocacy and the development of strategies to challenge prejudice, ethnocentrism and racism; and
5. the need for individuals to be aware of their own values, assumptions and expectations and how these impact on their interaction with Indigenous clients and communities.

The model was further refined by Ranzjin, McConnochie, and Nolan of the *Psychology and Indigenous Australians: Teaching, Practice and Theory* project team and was disseminated nationally and internationally as a requirement of their Carrick Institute grant. The Cultural Competence Pedagogical Framework and associated curriculum guidelines developed by Ranzjin *et al* have been endorsed by the Australian Psychological Society and forms part of the APAC accreditation guidelines for the education of Australian psychologists.

Charles Sturt University's *Indigenous Cultural Competency Pedagogical Framework* (ICCPF) was developed by Associate Professor Nolan in 2008. Course and subject designers from each of the universities faculties are required to map cultural competencies and related graduate attributes using this framework. The Indigenous Curriculum and Pedagogy Co-ordinator is located in the Division of Student Learning and is responsible for guiding and monitoring this foundational work in curriculum development.

To meet the requirements of the ICCPF course design must include Indigenous Australian content that corresponds to the following:

- a. Inclusion of an Indigenous Australian Studies subject in the first year of the program. This is a 'stand-alone' subject that develops knowledge of Indigenous Australian peoples' varied and diverse realities to enhance understandings of the effects of historical and contemporary policy and practices on the lives of Indigenous peoples. The subject must examine a range of social, cultural, historical, and institutional factors that impact on the contemporary experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians using a relational framework to develop skills in critical thinking, reflection, and analysis for reflexive practice within diverse professions. This is a foundation subject to prepare students for integrated Discipline-specific content throughout their course of study. Where this is not possible, a module of at least six weeks duration is taught within a subject as early as possible within the course;
- b. integrated discipline-specific content consistent with the developmental sequence in the Indigenous Cultural Competency Pedagogical Framework. This content can be taught through specific modules/subjects in middle and later years in the course, or embedded as assessable learning in various discipline/professional studies subjects; and

- c. employment of a range of culturally appropriate teaching, learning and assessment strategies across the course, including authentic case studies, field trips, and activities that develop student capabilities in line with the University's ICCPF.

This initial work is significant as it serves to ground the development of content in accordance with the *Incorporating Indigenous Australian Content in CSU Courses* policy. This policy confirms the 2008 Indigenous Education Strategy (IES) as the foundation of current strategic directions and initiatives in Indigenous Education. There are 36 recommendations and five institutional Key Performance Indicators in the Strategy which continue to provide a comprehensive framework for a whole-of-institution approach to Indigenous education founded upon the principles of cultural competence, social justice and reconciliation; thus positioning Charles Sturt University as a lead institution in the higher education sector in this regard.

### **7.1.1 Definition of Indigenous Australian content in CSU courses**

There are four primary classifications of Indigenous Australian content at the University:

- a. *Indigenous Australian Studies* - the broad area of inquiry related to Indigenous Australian knowledges, cultures and heritages, histories and issues which impact upon, or are of concern to, Indigenous peoples and communities today, such as health, education, criminal justice, land rights and Native Title. Indigenous Australian Studies does not cover profession-specific studies but prepares students to engage reflexively with further studies within their courses.

Indigenous Australian Studies may be delivered through stand-alone subjects, or as modules within Hybrid Indigenous Australian subjects, or as stand-alone modules within other subjects that do not have any other Indigenous Australian content;

- b. *Discipline-specific Indigenous Australian Studies* - that area of inquiry in Indigenous Australian Studies which is specifically related to the theoretical and practical knowledges required for a professional discipline. Discipline-specific Indigenous Australian Studies can be taught as 'stand-alone' subjects, modules or via integration of relevant assessable Indigenous content throughout the program. A subject can only be classified as Discipline-specific Indigenous Australian Studies when it has Indigenous content in every topic/module/assessment task of the subject;
- c. *Hybrid Indigenous Australian Studies* - defined as being a combination of Indigenous Australian Studies and Discipline-specific Indigenous Australian Studies. These are subjects that have Indigenous Australian content in every topic/ module/ assessment task of the subject; that is, 100% Indigenous Australian content in Hybrid Indigenous Australian Studies subjects. This is an effective strategy for the incorporation of Indigenous content into 'crowded' discipline-specific programs; and
- d. *Restricted Indigenous Australian Subjects* - defined as those courses or subjects of any discipline in which enrolment is restricted to Indigenous Australian students.

## **7.2 Academic Governance of the Incorporation of Indigenous Australian content**

The Indigenous Board of Studies (IBS) is a sub-committee of Academic Senate's Curriculum, Learning and Teaching Committee (CLTC). The Board guides processes relating to the development, design, and approval of Indigenous Australian content at the university. As a delegated authority of the CSU Academic Senate/CLTC, the Board also grants ICCPF compliance status to Indigenous content in courses.

The Board is authorised to approve courses, subjects, and/or modules when the following conditions are met:

1. the subject abstract includes specific reference to Indigenous Australian content;

2. learning outcomes align with Charles Sturt University Course-level Graduate Learning Outcomes that are aligned with the Indigenous Cultural Competence Pedagogical Framework (ICCPF);
3. learning outcomes are assessed, and learning and teaching and resources align with learning outcomes;
4. teaching, learning, assessment and resources are deemed to be culturally-appropriate and respectful; and
5. where an Indigenous Australian Studies module is inserted into a Hybrid or any other Charles Sturt University subject, it must be at least six weeks in duration and contain at least one assessment task, which must be successfully completed in order for the student to pass the subject.

The IBS comprises majority Indigenous membership through the Chair, Indigenous academics from each of the university's three faculties, and academic staff from the School of Indigenous Australian studies. Where no Indigenous academic is available, Faculty Dean's will nominate an alternate. All Indigenous academics have right of audience to the board meetings which are held monthly.

### **7.3 Implementation: The Incorporation of Indigenous Australian Content in CSU Courses Policy**

The *Incorporation of Indigenous Australian Content in CSU Courses Policy* (2016-2020) relies on whole-of-institution support and action. Faculties must develop internal support and Quality Assurance (QA) systems to ensure that Course Directors, course development teams, subject convenors and teaching teams address the requirements set out by the *Indigenous Board of Studies* for incorporating Indigenous Australian content at the University.

Faculties must collaborate with the School of Indigenous Australian Studies in the development and teaching of Hybrid subjects to ensure an integrated pedagogical approach. The School of Indigenous Australian Studies will teach all subjects/modules classified as *Indigenous Australian Studies* content in all courses at the University. Other Schools/Faculties may teach *Discipline-specific Indigenous Australian Studies* subjects/modules individually or in collaboration with the School of Indigenous Australian Studies.

Responsibility for the provision and co-ordination of Indigenous Cultural Competence professional learning is discharged through collaboration between Faculties, the Division of Student Learning, and the School of Indigenous Australian Studies.

Additional professional learning will be necessary for academic staff who teach modules/subjects that incorporate Indigenous Australian Studies or discipline specific studies. As a minimum requirement, the University's mandatory online cultural competency training must be completed unless staff can provide evidence of other relevant qualifications or previous training.

## **7.4 Identification, Assignment and Funding of Indigenous Australia subjects**

For the purposes of clear identification, assignment and funding of subjects with Indigenous Australian content to the relevant academic unit and discipline code, a system of prefixes were developed (IKC XXX) and rigorously applied.

The various subjects within Indigenous Australian Studies, hybrid Indigenous Australian Studies and discipline specific Indigenous Australian Studies will be assigned on the SAL to the Centre for Indigenous Studies or relevant School depending on who has management responsibilities. Proportional funding, where required will be negotiated between the Executive Dean and Head of School, School of Indigenous Australian Studies.

The assigned school and Faculty will be responsible for all aspects of subject management including assessment and submission of grades. Marking will be the responsibility of the teaching School.

Restricted Indigenous Studies subjects will continue to attract double the normal subject weighting for their discipline in Charles Sturt University's Faculty Funding Model. Non-restricted Indigenous Australian subjects (including hybrid and discipline specific subjects that meet the definition in Section 2 of the definitions in the [Section 2: Glossary of the Indigenous Australian Content in Courses Policy](#)) will also attract double the normal subject weighting during currency of this Indigenous Education Strategy.

## 8. The Scholarship of Indigenous Learning, Teaching and Community Engagement at Charles Sturt University

The incorporation of Indigenous content into the undergraduate programs offered by Charles Sturt University provides a valuable vehicle for developing a coordinated University-wide approach to Scholarship of Indigenous Learning, Teaching and Community Engagement with the objective of providing the best quality culturally inclusive professional education to graduates in Australia. As Wright (2002:5) suggests: “[t]he establishment of this [type of] cultural framework...will allow Indigenous people to realize their own potential and speaks to the creation of viable regional agreements and partnerships between [Universities,] private business, state institutions and Indigenous people”. This is consistent with Charles Sturt University Strategy and Plans 2017-2022.

The implementation of the [Indigenous Australian Content in Courses Policy](#) provides Charles Sturt University with the opportunity to:

- Involve a wide range of schools and professional programs across the university in the research and development of inclusive curriculum design and partnership teaching;
- Establish collaborative partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous academic staff across disciplines, Divisions, Institutes and Research Centres;
- Undertake a range of experimentation and evaluation of pedagogical strategies and practices in teaching Indigenous Studies;
- Disseminate this information and experience to colleagues from across and beyond the University through seminars, conference presentations, publications and research findings;
- Develop a body of knowledge and theory which would be of considerable interest to a wide range of professional bodies and other institutions;
- Form mutually beneficial relationships with Indigenous communities, private business and government and non-government bodies and institutions; and
- Make a major contribution to the process of reconciliation and achievement of social justice and human rights for Indigenous Australians, both nationally and within the region.

These activities will be undertaken through collaborative partnerships between the School of Indigenous Australian Studies, the Division of Student Learning and Faculties.



## 9. Indigenous Research

*Research is a core activity for universities, and...high quality Indigenous research...is a cornerstone of Indigenous higher education'*

*(AVCC Response on IHEAC Conference Report, September 2006:15)*

The Indigenous peoples of Australia have the distinction of being the most researched group in the world. From the time of the earliest explorers to the Australian continent, Indigenous peoples and their cultures have been subjects of definition, description and classification, primarily within the Western paradigmatic boundaries of Social Darwinism and functionalist anthropology. The Indigenous peoples and cultures of Australia have been defined without consent as the missing link between primate and Homo sapiens, as stone- age curiosities and prime examples of the pre-modern out-of-place with the modern. Phrenology was used to “prove” Indigenous inferiority and mental defectiveness while anthropology and the physical sciences combined to fill the museums and academic libraries of England and Europe with Indigenous bones, heritage and knowledge (*Hollinsworth, D 1998, Race and Racism in Australia*).

Historically, Western research informed the policies and practices of colonial and post-Federation governments and authorities, including policies allowing for the forcible removal of nearly 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and the removal of Indigenous groups from their ancestral country to reservations under the governance and management of the Aborigines Protection Board(s). Western research has defined generations of Indigenous families and children within deficit models, including explaining poor educational outcomes of Indigenous children a result of mental deficiency rather than a trans-generational consequence of historic marginalization and subjugation (*HREOC, 1997, The Bringing Them Home Report*). Since the 1980s Indigenous Australian peoples, their cultures and communities have increasingly become the subject of research from a broad range of disciplines including sociological and psychological inquiry, where non-Indigenous researchers seek to document and disseminate explanations for the high levels of Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage and mental illness.

Universities and others continue to produce volumes of research about Indigenous Australian peoples and cultures. Academics and researchers generate reports, journal articles and conference papers which aid their career and further the profile of their institution. However, much of this research continues to deliver little in the way of positive and practical outcomes for the subjects of the research. Indigenous Australians continue to be the most disadvantaged group in the country and policies continue to be developed on the basis of research, often to the detriment of Indigenous peoples and communities. Despite the quantity of quantitative and qualitative data that has been generated, Indigenous men and women continue to die 20 years earlier than their non- Indigenous counterparts. Indigenous educational outcomes remain poor and Indigenous health is of a third-world standard. Many communities continue to lack basic human rights, including 318 Indigenous communities in rural and remote Australia who currently do not have access to a water supply deemed under Australian National Guidelines as fit for human consumption (*Social Justice Report, 2007*).

Theoretically, the socio-political world has moved into an era of post-colonisation in which the rights of Indigenous peoples to equality and self-determination have been repositioned from the Fringe to the Centre. The time has come to transcend the rhetoric of post- colonisation and self-determination by implementing policies and procedures which ensure accountability in Indigenous research and empowerment of Indigenous community in the research process. Charles Sturt University is seeking to do this through the Research Narrative 2017, designed to ‘create a world worth living in’.

## 9.1 Indigenous Research at Charles Sturt University

*It is time to begin [the] process [of] develop[ing] a distinctive policy framework for enhancing and strengthening Indigenous research...*

*Fundamentally, we want to bring Indigenous research from the margins into the core of academic research culture and affirm its place and prominence within higher education.*

*To do this we need to increase the recognition of Indigenous research within the prevailing academic research paradigm, establish the unique facets and contribution of quality Indigenous research and dramatically increase both the number and capacity of Indigenous researchers*

*(Walter, M; Maynard, J; Milroy, J and Nakata, M, 2007, "Strengthening Indigenous Research Culture")*

There is extensive evidence drawing on a wide range of social indicators documenting the extent to which Indigenous Australians are not achieving social justice and redress within Australian society. However, there is a continuing lack of coordinated research developing practical strategies aimed at improving Indigenous autonomy, cultural identity and social equality. There is an ongoing need to develop a coordinated research effort which is directed towards identifying, developing and promoting practical policies and strategies which will support Indigenous communities, government agencies, the private sector and the broader population in the development of policies and strategies related to social justice.

Charles Sturt University is well positioned to lead in the development and coordination of high quality Indigenous research which is of practical benefit to the subjects of the research and assists in the achievement of social justice for Indigenous Australians, both nationally and within the geographical footprint of Charles Sturt University. Across all campuses, the University has established and maintained active relationships with local Indigenous communities over the past decade, and continues to do so. These relationships reflect the importance of the partnerships expected by Universities Australia, which commits to the action to "build robust, respectful and collaborative partnerships between themselves and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that they serve"(Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2017-2020, p. 14)

Charles Sturt University is currently involved in many activities which are designed to link the university with its Indigenous communities and organisations, including in the area of teaching, research and consultancy. Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers within Charles Sturt University are engaged in high quality Indigenous related research resulting in the development of a growing number of quality publications and the body of literature coming from that research. This research is inter-disciplinary in nature, and connects strongly to the research spheres of Resilient People, Flourishing Communities and Sustainable Environments described in CSU's 2017 Research Narrative. Current research at Charles Sturt University covers many areas, including Indigenous health and education, Indigenous knowledges and connection to Country, Indigenous entrepreneurship and Indigenous self-determination. This highlights the interconnectedness that exists between the fields of research focus, as Charles Sturt University strives 'to create a world worth living in'. In line with our values, the inter-disciplinary nature of Indigenous research allows the university to work on behalf of and with communities in ways that are Inclusive, Inspiring, Insightful and Impactful.

However, there are significant opportunities to extend and coordinate this level of engagement into a broader program with major benefits both to Indigenous communities and to the University. Given that the geographical footprint of Charles Sturt University is home to one of the largest populations of Indigenous Australians in the country, the University is well positioned to become the national leading higher education institution in the development of problem focused research based upon addressing the needs of Indigenous communities in culturally and methodologically appropriate ways.

In line with the recommendations of Universities Australia, Charles Sturt University is committed to having an Indigenous Research Strategy in place by 2018 that will replace the previous Indigenous Research Strategic Plan. This Strategy will be comprehensive in approach and set the

framework for success, accountability and sustainability of Indigenous research at Charles Sturt University. The strategy must contribute to increased productivity and quality in Indigenous research and facilitate cross-University collaborations. Based around the learnings from current and past research, the strategy will include:

- The conduct of methodologically appropriate ethical research practice which meets the needs and aspirations of Indigenous Australians and communities;
- The development of research procedures which facilitate central involvement of Indigenous researchers, organisations and communities;
- The promotion and recognition of the expertise of Indigenous Australian researchers, ensuring that the results of research and any papers generated from the research are provided to the relevant Indigenous community, organisation or individual(s) in an accessible and culturally acceptable format and that any cultural norms the relevant Indigenous community, organisation or individual(s) may have in relation to the publication, use of photographs and identification of individuals are respected; and
- The negotiation of issues of ownership and control of the knowledge and data generated from Indigenous research.

## 9.1.1 Capacity-Building Indigenous Research and Indigenous Researchers at Charles Sturt University

*“There is an obvious and urgent need to raise the number of Indigenous researchers. The disparity in enrolment, participation and especially completion rates of Indigenous post-graduate students is dramatic.*

*Indigenous students make up only 0.3 percent of PhD and 0.6 percent of Masters by Research completions. To achieve parity of participation the number of Indigenous doctoral students needs to more than triple and completions need to increase by more than 600 percent. The participation rate for Masters by Research needs to rise by more than one third and the completion rate needs to more than double to achieve parity. The task is formidable”.*

*(Walter, M; Maynard, J; Milroy, J and Nakata, M, 2007, „Strengthening Indigenous Research Culture”)*

Over the past two decades the number of Indigenous researchers has increased, however they remain grossly underrepresented in comparison to non-Indigenous researchers. According to the *AVCC Response to IHEAC Conference Report (September 2006:7)* “in order for Indigenous students to be represented in PhD programs at the same rate as non-Indigenous students, their number needs to increase by 282%”. In addition, the AVCC Report (2006:15) provided a number of recommendations for enhancing Indigenous research and increasing the number of Indigenous researchers including:

*AVCC Recommendation 4:*

*Earnings replacement scholarships for Indigenous people in current employment who are considering taking up postgraduate scholarships;*

*Adequate supervision arrangements for Indigenous students, including appropriate cultural support; and*

*Allowing credit for recognised prior learning.*

The AUQA 2006 Report on Indigenous Issues likewise made a number of key recommendations including:

*Having an Indigenous researcher on all Indigenous research projects; and*

*Developing a cohort of Indigenous mainstream researchers as mentors and collaborators.*

These have been areas of focus for the University over the past seven years, with various initiatives including the establishment of the Foundation Chair of Indigenous Studies, the creation of the Office of Indigenous Affairs and the Pro Vice-Chancellor of Indigenous Education, and the Indigenous Academic Fellowship program designed to provide a clear pathway into academia for potential Indigenous academics. While these initiatives are an important start, clearly, building the capacity of Charles Sturt University to produce high quality problem focused Indigenous research of national and international renown is reliant on capacity building the research qualifications and skills of Indigenous students and staff. It is therefore vital that the University develop and support programs to enhance the research skills and profiles of Indigenous staff and students, including formal training and mentoring by experienced researchers.

## 10. Indigenous Employment

*“Recruiting Indigenous staff who will serve as role models and provide added leadership for Indigenous students or Indigenous Studies is a good strategy”*

*(‘Serving the Cause of Indigenous Issues’ – AUQA Report 2006)*

Indigenous education cannot be addressed in isolation from Indigenous employment. Charles Sturt University has an Australian Indigenous Employment Strategy which was endorsed by University Council in December 2004. Since this time, the Australian Indigenous Employment Strategy has undergone regular reviews in 2007, 2011, 2015 and is due for review in 2017. The following discussion and recommendations of the Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy are neither a replacement of the Charles Sturt University Australian Indigenous Employment Strategy nor a duplication of its recommendations. Rather, the discussion and recommendations are designed to provide a whole-of-institution framework for improving Indigenous Education at Charles Sturt University and are consistent with and support the four outcomes of the Charles Sturt University Australian Indigenous Employment Strategy:

- a) An equitable and diverse workforce;
- b) A workforce that is culturally aware and safe for Indigenous staff and students;
- c) Strengthened partnerships and connected communities; and,
- d) Indigenous staff retention, satisfaction and equitable employment.

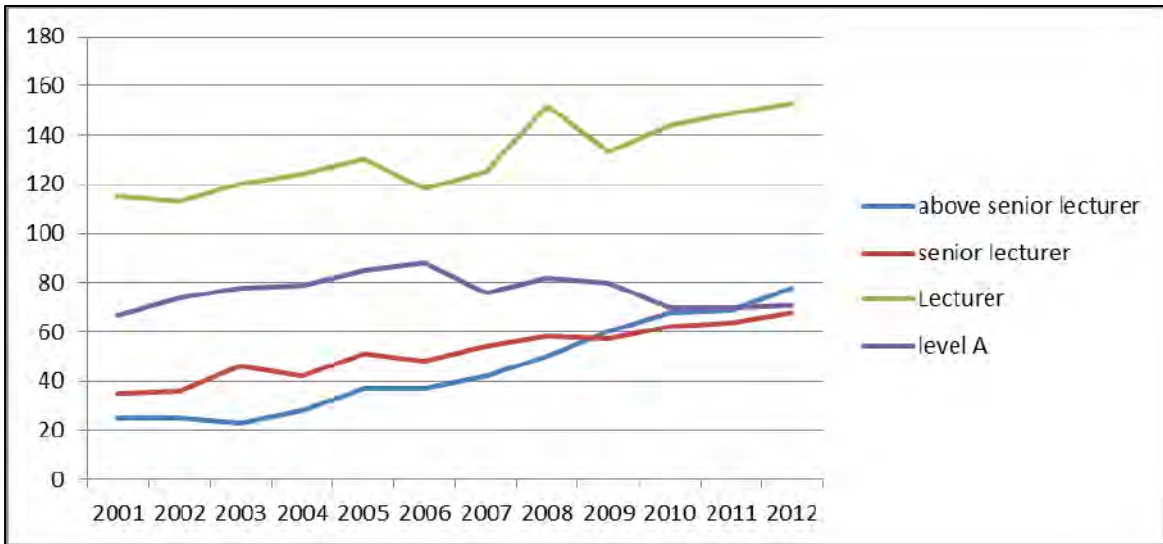
Full implementation of the recommendations of the Australian Indigenous Employment and Education Strategies will continue to result in an increase of Indigenous staff and thus enhance Charles Sturt University’s reputation as a preferred employer for Indigenous Australians. This in turn will have a positive impact upon Indigenous education at Charles Sturt University and its status as the preferred higher education provider for Indigenous students and professionals.

Over the past decade there has been a significant increase in the number of Indigenous Australians employed within the nation’s University sector. Between 2007 and 2016 staff numbers increased from 790 to 1228, bringing the proportion of Indigenous Australian staff in Universities to 1%. This represents an outstanding improvement; however, the proportion of Indigenous staff employed within the nation’s University sector continues to fall well below parity levels (*Department of Education and Training Indigenous Staffing Data, 21 December 2016*).

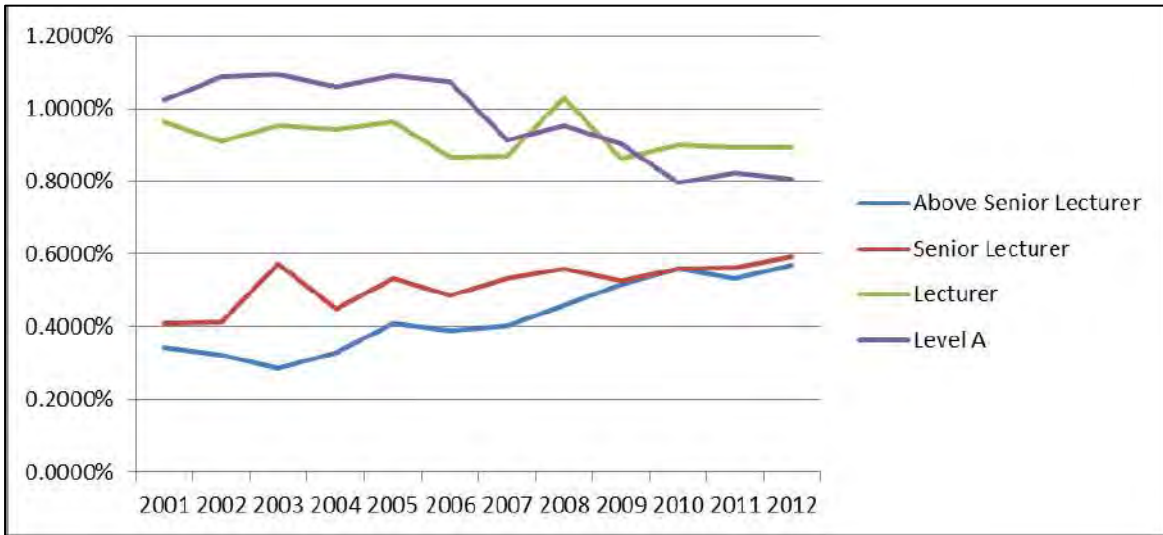
A lack of parity is also reflected in comparative data related to the functions and contractual nature of appointments of Indigenous staff across Australian Universities. The Department of Education and Training 2013 statistics reveal that of the 1172 Indigenous Australians employed in full-time and fractional roles in Australian universities in 2013, 802 (68.4%) were employed as general/professional staff. Of the 370 Indigenous Australian (31.2%) who were employed as academic staff, 32 (1.4%) were employed in ‘teaching only’ roles, 82 (7%) were employed in ‘research only’ roles and 256 (21.8%) were employed in ‘teaching research’ roles.

National data on the level/classification of these staff is not available for 2013, however, the graphs below obtained from a 2012 report ‘Growing the Indigenous Academic Workforce: ATSIHEAC Recommendations to government’ show that, whilst still below parity, Indigenous academic staff, except for Level A staff, have trended upward since 2001. They also indicate that, as a portion of all academic staff, Indigenous academic staff are trending upwards at more senior levels (e.g. senior lecturer & above senior lecturer). The same report shows that distribution across Faculties is approximately: 36% Health and Medicine; 32% Humanities and Social Sciences; 13% Business and Law; 11% Education; and 8% STEM (not health).

**Number of Indigenous Academic Staff 2001 -2012 at level**



**Indigenous academic staff as a proportion of all academic staff at level**



Source: “Growing the Indigenous Academic Workforce: ATSIHEAC Recommendations to government” obtained from the DET website 8/05/17.

CSU appointed its first Indigenous Employment Coordinator in 2004 and this position was translated to a full time continuing position. The Indigenous Employment Coordinator is located within the Division of Human Resources with direct line management to the Manager, Diversity and Equity and along with the Indigenous Employment Strategy Advisory Committee, is responsible for the development of the Charles Sturt University Australian Indigenous Employment Strategy.

The Charles Sturt University Australian Indigenous Employment Strategy aims to increase the employment of Indigenous Australians at the University through the development and implementation of strategies including publicity, scholarships options and financial incentives for employees, professional development, support and mentoring, and cultural awareness training for University staff. These aims align with recommendations of the National Higher Education Workforce Strategy developed by the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (2016) that, in order to recruit and retain Indigenous staff, Universities need to develop and implement programs and strategies specifically designed to support Indigenous staff members and capacity-build the next generation of Indigenous academic leaders.

Whilst the University has not been successful in reaching its target of 3% Indigenous Australian employment to date, it has made commendable progress towards reaching this goal. The implementation of the Charles Sturt University Indigenous Employment Strategy has resulted in an increase in the number of Indigenous staff employed across the University from 0.8% in 2004 to 2.5% in March 2016 (3.5% professional staff and 1.3% academic staff), bringing the total number of Indigenous Australian staff 56.

Full implementation of the recommendations of the Australian Indigenous Employment and Education Strategies will continue to result in an increase of Indigenous staff and thus enhance Charles Sturt University's reputation as a preferred employer for Indigenous Australians. This in turn will have a positive impact upon Indigenous education at Charles Sturt University and its status as the preferred higher education provider for Indigenous students and professionals.

## 11. Governance and Management of the Charles Sturt University Indigenous Education Strategy

The success of the Indigenous Education Strategy, as measured by the achievement of the five key performance indicators, requires a ‘whole of University’ response. Aspects of the Strategy are being reflected in other planning and strategy documents of the University, for example:

- CSU Research Narrative – very explicitly acknowledges an Indigenous focus in all areas: People – Communities – Environments;
- 2017-2022 CSU Strategic Direction – has emphasised the distinctiveness of the CSU curriculum which includes the adoption of Indigenous Cultural Competence as a graduate learning outcome. Together with other complementary strategies, this will transform quality and distinctiveness of the CSU degree.

Because of the policy and financial implications of the Strategy, it needs to be considered and endorsed not only by the Academic Senate, but also by the Vice-Chancellors Leadership Team (VCLT) and the University Council.

The Indigenous Education Steering Committee (IESC) will oversee the development, coordination and evaluation of the Strategy, and monitor the performance indicators. This Committee, through its Chair, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research, Development and Industry), will report directly to the VCLT. The Membership and Terms of Reference for the Committee is available from [here](#).

From time to time the IESC may form working groups, or request working groups to be formed, for the purposes of furthering the work of the Indigenous Education Strategy.



## 1. Recommendations

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations regarding future Closing the Gap reforms, policies, initiatives and programs:

### 1.1 Recognising the Value of Tertiary Education & Training

*Charles Sturt University recommends that:*

- i. the value of tertiary education and training be recognised in the ongoing Closing the Gap agenda, not just for school leavers and young adults, but all First Nations people including Elders.*
- ii. all education programs are designed to enable all First Nations students to engage in their own education in ways that enable them to achieve the successful outcomes they desire from the learning experience. Life experience, closely aligned with language and culture, is a strong determinant in what students want to learn and how they wish to pursue the necessary learning experiences.*
- iii. real progress to close the gap through tertiary education and training will depend on all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous working together to effect change, adoption of enhanced reporting mechanisms, measuring actual performance with meaningful and tangible indicators, valuing culture and custom in study and agreeing targets for responsibility of management and accountability of governance.*
- iv. unlocking the value of tertiary education and training will require:*
  - equality of study outcome, not just equity in participation;*
  - learner support to ensure capacity for moving forward and better futures;*
  - greater reach, depth and presence in remote Australia, including recognising the role of digital technology and face-to-face study hubs, but that the logistical and financial challenges associated with connectivity in remote communities and locations must be overcome;*
  - de-alienation of learning spaces, including actions to overcome sheer loneliness and inability to engage; and,*
  - continual improvement and investment in pathways from school to tertiary education and training, as well as for adults (without accredited qualifications or who have disengaged from formal education) to access vocational education and training as well as higher education.*

## 1.2 Enabling People to Work Effectively Together

*Charles Sturt University recommends that real progress to close the gap through tertiary education and training will depend on all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous working together to effect change, including through:*

- *commitment to a process of genuine and meaningful engagement that reduces and, in the future eliminates systemically and structurally racist ideas and beliefs;*
- *acceptance and recognition, including constitutionally, legally through treaty and truth commission;*
- *authentic collaborative conversations that enable Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to work together for a better future;*
- *address feelings of inadequacy through recognition of the genuine challenges of learning in remote communities, and being from a remote community;*
- *building and maintaining relationships with communities to support greater involvement in learning needs;*
- *cultural competency training and education for institutional staff (and students);*
- *draw on educators and trainers with learned-experiences;*
- *inclusion of these themes in curriculum, for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students; and,*
- *above all else, in concert with key stakeholders provide a welcoming environment in which to learn.*

## 1.3 Enhancing Reporting

*Charles Sturt University recommends that real progress to close the gap through tertiary education and training will depend on adoption of enhanced reporting mechanisms, including through reporting processes that:*

- *are informative and transparent;*
- *allow for Indigenous Australian's to be respected and have their say about what matters to them, and what is important to report on;*
- *are collaborative in nature, with Indigenous ownership;*
- *are genuinely consultative and outcomes focused (rather than "tick-the-box" bureaucracy);*
- *draw on feedback and really focus on need for change;*
- *manage and report quality and risk of reconciliation through continual improvement and a constant quest for Elder input and knowledge; and,*
- *inclusion of non-Indigenous students and staff of education and training institutions in equity and equality and the interplay between all cultures.*

#### 1.4 Using More Effective & Meaningful Performance Indicators

*Charles Sturt University recommends that real progress to close the gap through tertiary education and training will depend on measuring actual performance with meaningful and tangible indicators, including through:*

- *development of an agreed definition of what closing the gap in education means, what it is expected to deliver and how success will be measured (beyond NAPLAN, Year 12 completion etc.);*
- *metrics for education and training institutions commitment to First Nations;*
- *ensuring non-Indigenous Australians learning about First Nations' culture, custom, people and communities, at the regional and local level, again with metrics for progress*
- *metrics must take into account that not all Indigenous people, their Nations and their cultures are the same;*
- *customised and targeted education and training performance measurement that is culturally inclusive and linguistically appropriate (learning from the poor integration of NAPLAN questions with Indigenous and remote community cultures);*
- *consistent with 1.2 and 1.3 above, metrics should be developed and refined by listening to Indigenous Australians to ensure outcomes are tangible and real (and genuinely understanding need to close the gap); and,*
- *recognising that effective and meaningful key performance indicators are crucial to close gaps – as, what gets measured gets done.*

#### 1.5 Enabling People to Understand & Value Their Differences

*Charles Sturt University recommends that real progress to close the gap through tertiary education and training will depend on all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous valuing culture and custom in study, including through:*

- *education journeys that are grounded within First People's own cultures and languages;*
- *providing a sense of belonging that ensures that Indigenous students become critically engaged in the learning process;*
- *recognising that reconciliation is more than a legal definition of title, but is more about connection to country, and the nation's history, knowledge, language, culture and stories;*
- *strategies to combat disadvantage and promote positive futures embedded in teaching and learning plans;*
- *revitalising language as a solution for inclusivity, including education and training delivery in First Nation languages and teaching of First Nation languages to non-Indigenous Australians, particularly at the regional level;*
- *not only empowering students, but also enabling a quality of learning engagement that is equally satisfying for the teacher and fellow learners;*

- *striving to ensure that the world in which we live is one that values us as human beings who are valued for our ‘common humanity’, ie. we measure our worth by the way we are treated by others; and,*
- *as the basis for enabling people to understand and value their differences adopt a both ways education model for future teaching, learning and research in primary, secondary and tertiary education.*

## 1.6 Enabling People to Commit to Targets for Responsibility & Accountability

*Charles Sturt University recommends that real progress to close the gap through tertiary education and training will depend on all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous agreeing targets for responsibility of management and accountability of governance, including through:*

- *traditional knowledge, shared understanding and be evidence-based, or at the very least, be embedded in research that will provide a future empirical evidence base; and,*
- *performance management descriptors that promote, encourage and reward closing the gap initiatives in education and training, at the organisational, contractual (in the case of service delivery agreements) and personnel level, including, but not limited to the following higher education commitments and targets for responsibility and accountability:*
  - *further development of cultural competency frameworks which clearly map targets for responsibility and accountability across training organisations and education providers;*
  - *further formal research into decolonising and indigenising measures;*
  - *development of research that identifies and focusses on the aspirations of local Indigenous communities within the sphere of across training organisation and education provider influence;*
  - *developing innovative and engaging online training courses in cultural competency for all staff throughout their term of employment. Where possible, modules will be developed, and face-to-face delivery will be undertaken by qualified Indigenous staff;*
  - *the review of all hybrid subjects to ensure cultural competency is achieved across training organisations and education providers and the tertiary education system (possibly through ASQA and TEQSA);*

- *the Indigenous schools of training organisations and tertiary education providers will undertake community-based research to build and maintain relationships between all education and training providers including, the secondary school system, and industry or local businesses; and,*
- *student participation and retention in Indigenous knowledge and cultural subjects to be measured through internal analytics generated from enrolments, face to face and online student activity across training organisations and education providers.*



VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Grange Chancellery  
Panorama Avenue  
Bathurst NSW 2795



18 July 2018

Senator Chris Ketter  
Chair  
Senate Standing Committees on Economics – Economic References Committee  
Department of the Senate  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Ketter

## **INQUIRY INTO THE INDICATORS OF, AND IMPACT OF REGIONAL INEQUALITY IN AUSTRALIA**

On behalf of Charles Sturt University, I am pleased to respond to the Economic References Committee inquiry into the indicators of, and impact of regional inequality in Australia.

Charles Sturt University is Australia's largest regional university, with more than 43,000 students and approximately 2,100 FTE staff. Established in 1989, the University traces its origins to the formation of the Bathurst Experimental Farm and Wagga Wagga Experimental Farm in the 1890s. In one form or another, research, innovation and education has been integral to the University's character and mission for more than a century.

Charles Sturt University is a unique multi-campus institution with campuses at Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Canberra, Dubbo, Goulburn, Manly, Orange, Parramatta, Port Macquarie and Wagga Wagga, as well as various study centres located throughout regional and rural south-eastern Australia.

The University's commitment to the development and sustainability of rural and regional Australia is informed by the unique research focus undertaken, and the partnerships it has formed with each of its campus' local communities, local industry, and with the broader regions it serves.

Charles Sturt University offers a comprehensive suite of research and academic training programs that focus on addressing rural and regional labour market needs, growing regional economies, and preparing students for the jobs of the new economy through rural and regional Australia.

Over the last year or so, Charles Sturt University has provided extensive commentary and opinion by way of submission to a range of parliamentary and departmental inquiries, across the Australian, New South Wales and Victorian Governments relating to regional economies and the options available to strengthen the economic, social and environmental resilience of Australia's regional cities, rural towns and remote communities.

In many cases, the commentary provided in our submissions has examined the impact of regional inequality in Australia, including within regions, between regions and between regional Australia and our major metropolitan centres. Further, the recommendations we have put forward in our submissions have included many suggestions for addressing regional inequality and what indicators should be measured to ensure success in this endeavour.

All our submissions are founded on an extensive review of Australian and international literature, as well as our own comprehensive research across regional, rural and remote south-eastern Australia regarding the indicators of, and impact of regional inequality in Australia. Throughout these submissions our commentary and recommendations address:

- fiscal policies at federal, state and local government levels;
- improved co-ordination of federal, state and local government policies;
- regional development policies;
- infrastructure;
- education;
- building human capital;
- enhancing local workforce skills;
- employment arrangements;
- decentralisation policies;
- innovation;
- manufacturing; and,
- other related matters and considerations in the contest of regional, rural and remote southern New South Wales and northern Victoria.

I would like to draw the Committee's attention to 11 parliamentary and departmental submissions that Charles Sturt University has developed and prepared over the last year that provide recommendations either in full or part that examine economic indicators and regional inequality. These submissions are detailed below with full referencing for each submission and an extract of recommendations from each submission provided at Attachment 1 for the Committee's reference. I believe that the review of the following submissions by the Committee will be of value in during your inquiry into the indicators of, and impact of regional inequality in Australia:

- [Charles Sturt University – Submission - Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment \(A More Sustainable, Responsive and Transparent Higher Education System\) Bill 2017, Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee Inquiry, 8 June 2017.](#)
- [Charles Sturt University – Submission - New South Wales: Strong, Smart and Connected Defence and Industry Strategy 2017 Inquiry, New South Wales Legislative Council - Standing Committee on State Development, 18 June 2017.](#)
- [Charles Sturt University – Submission - Improving Completion, Retention and Success in Higher Education - Discussion Paper, June 2017, Higher Education Standards Panel, 7 July 2017.](#)
- [Charles Sturt University – Submission - Inquiry into Perinatal Services in Victoria, Family and Community Development Committee, 14 July 2017.](#)
- [Charles Sturt University – Submission - School to Work Transition, Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, 2 August 2017.](#)
- [Charles Sturt University – Submission - Independent Review Regional, Rural and Remote Education, Australian Government, 29 August 2017.](#)
- [Charles Sturt University – Submission - Reforms to Modernise Australia's Visa System, Australian Government - Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 15 September 2017.](#)
- [Charles Sturt University – Submission - Inquiry on the Impact of Technological and Other Change on the Future of Work and Workers in Australia, Select Committee on the Future of Work and Workers, 20 February 2018.](#)
- [Charles Sturt University Submission – Advice on the Impacts of Professional Accreditation in Higher Education - Consultation on the Implementation of Recommendations from the Higher Education Standards Panel, 30 April 2018.](#)
- [Charles Sturt University – Submission - Closing the Gap – The Next Phase - Australian Government, 30 April 2018.](#)

In particular, I would like to draw the Committee's attention to Charles Sturt University's comprehensive submission on regional development and decentralisation that was prepared for the House of Representatives Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation in September last year, [Charles Sturt University – Submission - Inquiry into Regional Development and Decentralisation, House of Representatives - Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation](#), 15 September 2017. The commentary and recommendations put forward in this Submission will be of value to the Committee in its inquiry into the indicators of, and impact of regional inequality in Australia. A summary of our regional development and decentralisation submission is provided herein.

Charles Sturt University's submission to the Select Committee, outlined the University's perspective of the opportunities for and challenges to regional development and decentralisation in Australia. While our specific commentary and recommendations in the Submission were drawn from our century-plus experience, research, knowledge and skills in development of regional, rural and remote communities in southern New South Wales and northern Victoria, our commentary and recommendations are directly applicable to the development of all non-metropolitan Australia.

Charles Sturt University's believe that genuine, bipartisan commitment across all tiers of government to the coordinating of the long-term strategies and actions of economic, social and environmental stakeholders in any given region, will deliver positive outcomes and great benefit for Australians living in regional, rural and remote communities, including:

- i. growing regional populations to ensure internationally competitive relevance, increased standard of living and improved quality of life;
- ii. sharing economic, social and environmental access and equity between regional and metropolitan Australia;
- iii. enabling world-class experiences, cutting-edge skills development and global-knowledge transfer for people living in the regions;
- iv. increasing participation and productivity rates in regional economies, while concomitantly reducing future economic risk through diversification;
- v. attracting and retaining private and public-sector investment, including foreign investment in the industries and infrastructure needs of the future;
- vi. enhancing the vibrancy, cohesiveness and engagement of regional communities, particularly regional cities and rural towns; and,
- vii. positioning regional cities, not just as local service centres, but as places with unique value propositions and competitive advantages on a national and an international scale.

**1. Charles Sturt University recommends that a regional development framework with the seven outcomes detailed above be agreed through a national partnership comprising all levels of government and that pragmatic and measurable goals and objectives be attached to each outcome.**

Delivering positive outcomes and great benefit for Australians living and working in regional, including indicators of and actions for addressing inequality in regional, rural and remote settings will require rigorous system integration, that is:

- i. holistic, with long-term policy focus and program effort on the strategies, actions and tasks required to deliver regional, rural and remote development benefit;
- ii. built on strongly facilitated participation by all economic, social, cultural and environmental stakeholders in any given region that drives a very high level of distinguishing regionalism;



- iii. based on shared regional vision and leadership, with whole of stakeholder agreement and commitment to definable and measurable economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes;
- iv. governed and coordinated at the regional level, with management and operationalisation distributed to the communities that comprise each region;
- v. guided by a planning, reporting and communication framework, including an overall regional development strategy containing economic, social, cultural and environmental roadmaps and investment plans, including capital sources and public-sector budgets;
- vi. owned and championed by individual members of the community (at local, think global – “glocal”); and,
- vii. a market-based response, where government intervention is strictly in the public good and within the scope of an overall regional development strategy, for example, only decentralising government agencies where there is positive net benefit and investing in trade facilitation rather than subsidising corporate decentralisation.

To this end, Charles Sturt University’s principal recommendations to boost the performance of Australia’s regional, rural and remote development efforts, including indicators of and actions for addressing inequality in regional, rural and remote settings is to rigorously strengthen system integration.

**2. Charles Sturt University, recommends that – arm’s length, bipartisan, beyond cycle and resourced and championed governance and management model be implemented as follows:**

- a. Through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and including Local Government Association (LGA), the Commonwealth would establish the Australian Regional Development Commission, the Commission would report to COAG, national plan Regions 2030 Unlocking Opportunity could provide the foundations on which to build this.**
- b. The Commission would be funded 50/50 by the Commonwealth, States and Territories and would work with bodies such as Infrastructure Australia and the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC), with initial seed funding over four years of \$10 billion.**
- c. Commissioners would be nominated Australia’s Regional Development Australia Committees (RDAs) and appointed by a COAG Regional Development Ministerial Council, while the RDAs would be resourced to operate as locally-championed regional branches of the Commission.**
- d. The Commission would be headquartered in regional Australia, located in Orange or Dubbo as geographically they are in the centre of regional eastern Australia.**
- e. The RDAs would be resourced to continue and improve their regional planning work, based on the framework set out above and would have greater involvement from rural and remote communities in each area, thereby creating a genuine hub and spoke with a regional city at its core.**

Successful regional development strategy, action and task implementation will require investment in infrastructure from road, rail and aviation, through to social and cultural service provision and information technology and communications. Above all else, equitable and accessible world-class communications infrastructure will be required to develop our regional, rural and remote communities in the digital age of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will be essential to resolve the indicators of and actions for addressing inequality in regional, rural and remote settings.

Upgrading of the National Broadband Network (NBN) scope, so that very high speed, fibre to the home broadband can be delivered throughout regional, rural and remote Australia will be essential to catalyse growth of our regions and address inequality. It will also be crucial to ensure that Australian's living in regional, rural and remote Australia have the same economic, social, cultural and environmental opportunities as Australians living in metropolitan centres. World-class broadband services are also essential to ensure regional wellbeing through access and equity in education, healthcare, government and financial services.

***3. Charles Sturt University recommends an immediate, independent review of the NBN project be undertaken and that the NBN roll-out be significantly strengthened to ensure top-10 OECD ranking fibre to the home broadband services be made available to all Australians living in regional, rural and remote communities and that fibre to the CBD's of each regional city in Australia be increased to 1GBs.***

All regions, including most metropolitan centres, with the possible exception of the outer ring suburban areas of Australia's largest cities, are generally well-served by physical infrastructure such as roads, utilities and aviation as well as social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and tertiary education and training providers. While gaps exist, there are examples, particularly in regional Australia of infrastructure investments being made before population demands justified expenditure. Infrastructure investment by both the public and private sectors must be driven by the needs of a growing population.

Through organisations such as Infrastructure Australia and the Government's City Deals initiatives, population growth in any given region provides the business case for investment and is generally delivered as and when it is required by the community. As Australia's regions grow so will infrastructure investment, the key is for the economic, social, cultural and environmental stakeholders in any given region to work together to grow the population to justify continued investment in infrastructure as a means to addressing infrastructure-created inequality.

Decentralisation of public sector organisations can play a vital role in the development of our regional cities but should only be undertaken where it fits with well thought through strategies and detailed plans based on cost-benefit analysis that contributes to each region's given strengths.

While Charles Sturt University believes there is a role for governments in facilitating the involvement of national and multinational firms in regional cities, we do not support government resources being directed to the decentralisation of private firms.

It is all about what fits best with regional strategies and plans and communicating the unique mix to attract organisations. A market-based response. It is about competitiveness of a region to attract, not for governments subsidise business or act as lender of last resort. Public investment in regional development must focus on enhancing competitiveness, particularly public good infrastructure, such technology and social services. We support governments playing a role in investment attraction but not in taking on or sharing investment risk. Such an approach will be essential to achieve sustained reduction in regional inequality.

**4. Charles Sturt University recommends:**

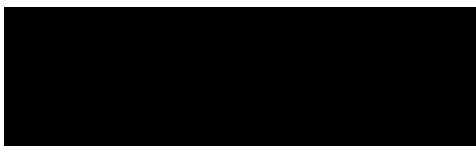
- a. government investment in regional development be restricted to public good and public accessible activities, including economic, social, cultural and environmental infrastructure, such as technology, transport, education and training and health; and,**
- b. government provide funding, through the regional development governance and management mechanisms detailed above and through industry departments for the purposes of private sector investment attraction and facilitation, including foreign direct investment, while;**
- c. government must ensure that it does not use tax payers' funds to share or subsidise private sector risk or be trapped into acting as a lender of last resort to the private sector under any circumstances.**

Drawing on our *Charles Sturt University – Submission - Inquiry into Regional Development and Decentralisation, House of Representatives - Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation* and our other recent parliamentary and departmental submissions detailed at Attachment 1, we have provided an extensive and detailed range of recommendations that we believe would contribute to addressing the indicators of and mitigating the effects of regional inequality in Australia.

Specifically, our recommendations would position the regional cities, rural towns and remote communities within the University's footprint for better economic, social and environmental outcomes which in turn would reduce, if not eliminate, regional inequality. Our recommendations are equally relevant to cities, towns and communities beyond our footprint in New South Wales and Victoria, as well as the rest of non-metropolitan Australia.

I would along with relevant Charles Sturt University representatives would be delighted to provide further information to the Committee and would be available to provide evidence at any proposed hearings that you may undertake in relation to considering the merits of the addressing inequality between Australia's regional, rural and remote communities and our metropolitan centres.

Yours sincerely



**Professor Andrew Vann**  
Vice-Chancellor

# **CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY**

## **ATTACHMENT 1**

Senate Standing Committees on  
Economics – Economic References  
Committee

### **Inquiry into the Economic Indicators of, and Impact of Regional Inequality in Australia**

30 April 2018

[Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment \(A More Sustainable, Responsive and Transparent Higher Education System\) Bill 2017](#)

**Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee Inquiry**

**8 June 2018**

**1. Recommendations**

Charles Sturt University recommends the following amendments to the Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment (A More Sustainable, Responsive and Transparent Higher Education System) Bill 2017:

**1.1 Recalibration of the Costs of Higher Education**

Efficiency Dividend on the Commonwealth Grant Scheme

***That the proposed Bill in its current form be amended to remove the proposed efficiency dividend on the Commonwealth Grant scheme.***

Increased Student Share of Higher Education Funding

***That the Bill in its current format be amended to delete all sections relating to increasing student share of higher education funding.***

***In amending the Bill or determining findings relating to proposed Bill, the Committee examine any modelling of the combined impacts of these measures particularly upon women and equity groups.***

Medical, Dental and Veterinary Science Loading

***That the proposed amendment to the Act detailed in the Bill proceed.***

**1.2 Reforms to the Commonwealth Grants Scheme**

New Arrangements for Sub-Bachelor Courses

***That the proposed change to new arrangements for Sub-Bachelor courses set out in the Bill proceed, with amendments to establish criteria for approved courses.***

New Arrangements for Enabling Courses

***That the proposed Bill be amended to remove the new arrangements for Enabling Courses.***

Scholarship System for Postgraduate Coursework Places

***That the proposed Bill in its current form not proceed in relation to the scholarship system for postgraduate coursework places.***

Expansion of Support for Work Experience in Industry Units

***That the proposed Bill in its current form proceed in relation to the arrangements for work experience in industry units.***

Performance Contingent Funding for Universities

***That the proposed Bill not proceed in its current form in relation to performance contingent funding.***

***That a national consultation process be undertaken before performance contingent funding is implemented.***

### 1.3 Changes to HELP Eligibility and Repayment Arrangements

***That the proposed Bill not proceed in its current form in relation to reducing the repayment threshold for HELP Repayment.***

### 1.4 HEPPP Reforms

***That the Bill be amended to allow for a five year improvement cycle in progress, instead of a three year improvement cycle. This amendment would allow for smoother and more accurate representation of trends in progress. This will allow for the overall impact of HEPPP post uncapping of places in 2012 to be taken into account.***

***That the Bill allow for performance funding weighted by the number of students who improve in addition to the percentage points improvement methodology contemplated.***

### 1.5 Definition of Higher Education Award

***That this Schedule of the Bill proceed.***

[New South Wales: Strong, Smart and Connected Defence and Industry Strategy 2017 Inquiry](#)

**New South Wales Legislative Council - Standing Committee on State Development**

**18 June 2018**

**1. Recommendations**

Charles Sturt University provides a range of recommendations relating to the policy outcomes and program objectives contained in the *New South Wales: Strong, Smart and Connected Defence and Industry Strategy 2017* that details the Government's defence industry strategy for the State as part of the New South Wales Parliament's Standing Committee on State Development as part of the Committee's inquiry into the defence industry in the New South Wales:

- 1.1 Maximise opportunities for NSW-based companies from Defence's growing exports and investment in defence capability – in both acquisition and sustainment

***Charles Sturt University recommends that the New South Wales: Strong, Smart and Connected Defence and Industry Strategy 2017 defence industry strategy be implemented in its current form and that the Government consider further increasing its financial investment in the sector to ensure that its industry policy outcomes are achieved.***

- 1.2 Encourage defence industry innovation, research and education including developing the future workforce

***Charles Sturt University recommends that the defence industry innovation, research, education and future workforce elements of the New South Wales: Strong, Smart and Connected Defence and Industry Strategy 2017 be strengthened by direct Government investment, including:***

- i. a defence industries technical skills development fund of up to \$25m per annum;***
- ii. a professional development fund of up to \$10m per annum; and,***
- iii. implementation of a "development-intensive" research fund of at least \$25m per annum modelled on the highly successful Small Business Innovation Research Program (SBIRP) in the United States.***

- 1.3 Identify targets, programs and projects for defence spending in New South Wales

***Charles Sturt University recommends establishment of a Ministerial Council for Defence Industry Development that would comprise members drawn from Defence, industry, scientific and community sectors.***

- 1.4 Maximise the economic benefits of locating defence force bases and defence industry in the regions

***Charles Sturt University recommends strengthening the regional development element of the New South Wales: Strong, Smart and Connected Defence and Industry Strategy 2017 by establishing a committee of the Ministerial Council for Defence Industry Development that we propose above, that would focus exclusively on maximising the regional economic benefit attained from colocation of Defence bases and defence industries in the State's regional centres, with membership of this committee comprising members drawn from regionally-based Defence, industry, scientific and community sectors.***

1.5 How to establish and sustain defence supportive communities

***Charles Sturt University recommends that the Government establish a \$5m per annum community development fund to support establishing and sustaining defensive supportive communities.***

1.6 Further enhance collaboration between the NSW Government and Commonwealth agencies

***Charles Sturt University makes no recommendations with regards enhancing collaboration between the New South Wales Government and Commonwealth agencies.***

1.7 Any other related matters

***Charles Sturt University makes no further recommendations regarding the policy outcomes to be achieved and the program objectives to be implemented as part of the New South Wales: Strong, Smart and Connected Defence and Industry Strategy 2017.***



[Improving Completion, Retention and Success in Higher Education  
Discussion Paper, June 2017](#)

**Higher Education Standards Panel**

**7 July 2017**

**1. Recommendations**

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations with regards the Higher Education Standards Panel's *Improving Completion, Retention and Success in Higher Education Discussion Paper*.

**1.1 Setting expectations of completion**

**(1) Completion rates**

***Charles Sturt University recommends that formal expectations not be set for completion rates.***

**1.2 Enhancing transparency**

**(1) Data collection**

***Charles Sturt University recommends that:***

- no changes to data collection are required to enhance transparency and accountability; and,***
- attrition calculations be adjusted to accommodate study sessions that cross calendar years and to account for specific student related factors.***

**(2) Government websites**

***Charles Sturt University recommends that:***

- student success, completion, retention and attrition data should be made available on the Department of Education and Training's website but not on QILT; and,***
- a completions calculator should not be provided for prospective students.***

**(3) Student tracking**

***Charles Sturt University supports this element of the Panel's Discussion Paper.***

### 1.3 Supporting students to make the right choices

#### (1) Student assistance

*Charles Sturt University recommends that:*

- *Charles Sturt University supports the need for universities to raise the aspirations of prospective students through outreach and early intervention.*
- *Furthermore, Charles Sturt University, recommends that informed career advice be provided to young people from as early as primary school.*

### 1.4 Supporting students to complete their studies

#### (1) Support strategies

*Charles Sturt University recommends that:*

- *Charles Sturt University argues that there are no universal best strategies, that the effectiveness of strategies are dependent on cohort and context.*
- *Charles Sturt University supports the nuanced use of a wide range of support strategies.*

#### (2) Entry-Exit pathways

*Charles Sturt University supports increased flexibility, but argues it must be accompanied by support to navigate the increased complexity flexibility would create.*

### 1.5 Disseminating best practice

#### (1) Evaluation approaches

*Charles Sturt University makes no recommendations with regards disseminating best practices and evaluation approaches.*

#### (2) International experience

*Charles Sturt University makes no recommendations with regards disseminating best practices and international experience.*

#### (3) Sharing best-practice

***Charles Sturt University makes no recommendations with regards disseminating best practices and sharing best-practice.***

(4) **Embedding success**

***Charles Sturt University makes no recommendations with regards disseminating best practices and embedding success.***

1.6 **Regulating**

(1) **Compliance strategies**

***Charles Sturt University recommends that TEQSA continues to use its full range of powers proportionately to risk for Table A, B and C providers. We do not believe any additional powers are required, but accept that additional processes might be required for high risk Table C providers.***

## [Inquiry into Perinatal Services in Victoria](#)

### Family and Community Development Committee

14 July 2018

#### 1. Recommendations

Charles Sturt University recommends the following with regards the improvement of perinatal services in Victoria:

##### 1.1 The availability, quality and safety of health services delivering services to women and their babies during the perinatal period

*Charles Sturt University recommends, as a first step to enhancing perinatal services in Victoria, that the State Government:*

- *make access to the State's birthing statistical data bases open to the public with no charge; and,*
- *that the State Government put greater resources and effort into understanding Victoria's perinatal service requirements, including collection and analysis of birthing data for informed, evidenced-based decision making.*

##### 1.2 The impact that the loss of commonwealth funding (in particular, the National Perinatal Depression Initiative) will have on Victorian hospitals and medical facilities as well as on the health and wellbeing of Victorian families

*Charles Sturt University recommends that the Victorian Government advocate for reinstatement and full funding of the National Perinatal Depression Initiative by the Commonwealth.*

*Furthermore, as part of reinstating the Initiative, Charles Sturt University recommends that the State Government, whether in conjunction with the Commonwealth and/or in its own right make further resources available to:*

- *boost availability of staff trained in perinatal depression identification and management;*
- *enhance perinatal depression training resources and the delivery of perinatal depression training with public vocational and higher education providers and in health institutions; and,*
- *clarify and effectively communicate perinatal depression screening protocols.*

##### 1.3 The adequacy of the number, location, distribution, quality and safety of health services capable of dealing with high-risk and premature births in Victoria

***Refer recommendation at Section 4.1(b) as a first step in addressing the adequacy of the number, location, distribution, quality and safety of health services capable of dealing with high-risk and premature births in Victoria.***

- 1.4 The quality, safety and effectiveness of current methods to reduce the incidence of maternal and infant mortality and premature births

***Refer recommendation at Section 4.1(b) as a first step in addressing the quality, safety and effectiveness of current methods to reduce the incidence of maternal and infant mortality and premature births in Victoria.***

- 1.5 Access to and provision of an appropriately qualified workforce, including midwives, paediatricians, obstetricians, general practitioners, anaesthetists, maternal and child health nurses, mental health practitioners and lactation consultants across Victoria

***Charles Sturt University recommends that the Victorian Government make funding available to substantially grow the perinatal services workforce in Victoria to ensure that the State's perinatal service workforce is appropriately qualified and operates at world's-best standards. This would include, amongst program elements, the following:***

- ***establishment of a centre for regional, rural and remote midwifery practice in collaboration with Charles Sturt University's and La Trobe University's Murray Darling Medical School to deliver teaching and learning for the development of the midwifery profession and provide an industry research function, thereby providing the evidence base for governments to make policy decisions and develop and implement programs to enhance perinatal services in regional Australia;***
- ***engaging Charles Sturt University to design, develop and deliver a "midwife practitioner" course at Master's degree level, that would provide highly specialised midwives to work as independent midwives, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas of Victoria; and,***
- ***engaging Charles Sturt University to design, develop and deliver a "child health nurse" course, that would provide highly specialised child health nurses, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas of Victoria.***

- 1.6 Disparity in outcomes between rural and regional and metropolitan locations; and,

***Charles Sturt University recommends, as a first step to enhancing perinatal services in regional, rural and remote Victoria, that the State Government:***

- ***make access to the State's perinatal statistical data bases open to the public with no charge; and,***
- ***that the State Government put greater resources and effort into understanding regional, rural and remote Victoria's perinatal service***

***requirements, including collection and analysis of birthing data for informed, evidenced-based decision making.***

***Furthermore, by adopting our recommendation at Section 4.5(b), Charles Sturt University, through the Murray Darling Medical School, could provide the Victorian Government with the capability and capacity to collect and analyse data on perinatal services in regional, rural and remote Victoria which would provide an evidence base from which governments can make sound policy decisions and design effective programs for service enhancement.***

**1.7 Identification of best practice.**

***Charles Sturt University recommends that the Victorian Government invest in a thorough and detailed analysis of perinatal best practice that draws on Victorian, Australian and international experience, and that such an investment include comparison of perinatal service best practice across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote communities to underwrite evidence based decision making.***

***Furthermore, by adopting our recommendation at Section 4.5(b), Charles Sturt University, through the Murray Darling Medical School, could provide the Victorian Government with the capability and capacity to collect and analyse perinatal best practice services across Victorian, Australian and international regional, rural and remote communities.***

## School to Work Transition

### **Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training**

**2 August 2018**

#### **1. Recommendations**

Charles Sturt University provides recommendations on nine key elements of Australia's school to work transition system, our recommendations are aimed at improving policy outcomes from and boosting program outputs of Australia's school to work system for the future success of all young Australians.

##### **1.1 School to work transition policy outcomes**

Charles Sturt University believes that transition from school to work policy outcomes must:

- provide access to all;
- enable individualisation of solutions;
- address generic problem-solving;
- engage the community – whole of student support system; and,
- guarantee benefit, at both the individual, institutional and community level that:
  - recognise and accept credentials authorising entry into career opportunities or postsecondary education programs;
  - placement or acceptance in post secondary vocational training and higher education programs;
  - placement in competitive or supported employment; and,
  - participation in continuing and adult education, adult services, and independent living in community settings.

##### **1.2 School to work transition program design**

Charles Sturt University believes success in transition from school to work program design, development and implementation aimed at meeting the aforementioned policy outcomes, relies on:

- pathways that deliver strong social capital in communities;
- transition programs that enhance the work skills and dispositions of young Australians to work – making them 'work ready';

- transition programs that develop significant human capital capabilities in young people which enable them to assume positions in the workplace more readily and with better outcomes for employers;
- ensuring considerable benefits to all parties involved in placing young people in quality programs that support the transition from school to work are realised;
- employers and potential employees being encouraged to trial an industry or company to ascertain if it was their preference;
- considering the demands of local sites, different opportunities are available for all stakeholders;
- involving considerable effort from schools and industry;
- providing options for addressing skill shortage, nationally but also locally;
- acknowledging that economic benefits are long term and should be built into the long-term planning of potential employers; and
- acknowledging that rural Australia may be particularly disadvantaged in offering options for transitioning young people from school to work as there are often limited options available in some towns for employment.

### 1.3 **School to work transition program outputs**

Charles Sturt University believes success in transition from school to work program interventions, or actions, incorporated into the design and development of school to work transition programs, must facilitate the following seven system outputs:

1. economic and education fundamentals as the foundation for good outcomes.
2. reduction in early school leaving as it is more efficient and effective than treating disengagement at a later stage.
3. rapid responses to disengagement.
4. formal participation requirements to drive effective responses for improving outcomes.
5. Individualised approaches, but recognise they are more expensive to deliver.
6. Solutions that are driven locally as they tend to be more sustainable and effective.
7. Integrated responses that help reduce confusion amongst participants and are more efficient and effective.

### 1.4 **School to work transition stakeholder responsibilities**



Charles Sturt University believes the development of work or study 'readiness' must be a joint responsibility of all stakeholders with definition of the roles and responsibilities and the theme of collaboration and partnership between schools, families and employers required:

- Schools (and families) predominantly have responsibility for assisting young people to start the development of Foundation Skills and Knowledge and Self-understanding.
- Some exposure to Broad Industry Understanding can take place at school, but that it requires the input of employers and industry.
- Tertiary education providers and employers are responsible for helping young people to develop Occupation-specific Skills and Knowledge.
- Employers are responsible supporting the development of Workplace-specific Skills and Knowledge, including making expectations of workplace behaviour and performance clear to young people.

### 1.5 School to work transition priority areas

Charles Sturt University believes that there are three broad priority areas for facilitating a successful transition from compulsory education to full-time work:

1. Getting educational fundamentals right:
  - Developing literacy and numeracy skills in early school years.
  - Strong and effective school leadership.
  - A robust curriculum.
  - High standards of teacher quality and effective accountability.
  - Appropriate recognition of school and student disadvantage in funding arrangements.
2. Promoting engagement and ensuring streamlined services are available for young people who are disengaged from employment, education and training:
  - Dealing more quickly with young people that become disengaged.
  - Creating integrated responses to promote engagement and facilitate re-engagement and in delivering such integrated responses managed their delivery in an accountability framework that answers:
    - Who should fund the elements and what level of funding certainty should be provided?
    - Whether the elements should be re-focused in any way, including eligibility criteria and target clients?
    - How to manage the transition from a National Partnership context?

3. Engaging business to increase opportunities and enhance the employability of young people:
  - Schools, the community and businesses need to work together in partnerships to create opportunities for successful transitions to meaningful employment.

## 1.6 School to work transition system governance

Charles Sturt University believes driving positive school to work transition will require effective system governance that involves all stakeholders in agreeing policy outcomes and setting program outputs, including:

- A clear scope and agenda for its operation.
- Funding and secretariat support to enable data collection, analysis and dissemination.
- Fewer meetings of higher value, including one face-to-face meeting focused on the annual reporting of data/trends and interpretation from experts in the field.
- A continued commitment to openness of discussion and sensitivity to specific jurisdictional contexts.
- A forum for responding to emerging policy issues and priorities.

## 1.7 School to work transition measurement and reporting

Charles Sturt University believes that measuring and reporting will be crucial and that effective measuring and reporting should provide a basis for evidence-based decision making in the governance of Australia's school to work transition system, however to deliver effective system measurement and reporting and number of barriers will need to be addresses, including:

- the widespread lack of understanding and confidence in how to measure these school to work transition capabilities at the individual, institutional and community wide level in a way that is authentic and meaningful;
- concerns about what the results of the assessment of these capabilities might be used for and that this might further disadvantage those who are already struggling, or that results may not be interpreted accurately by employers, perhaps for diagnostic or self-reflection purposes rather than for summative reporting; and,
- no point in establishing a benchmark for certain capabilities if there are not mechanisms in place for helping students to reach those benchmarks.

## 1.8 **An effective policy framework for school to work transition**

In summary, Charles Sturt University proposes a school to work transition policy framework that we believe would deliver positive results at the individual, institutional and community level, our five-part framework includes:

1. Workplace specific skills and knowledge.
2. Occupation specific skills and knowledge.
3. Broad industry understanding, including career pathways and necessary attributes and skills.
4. Self-understanding, including an understanding of own strengths, weaknesses and interests and how these might relate to work, as well as an ability to manage own behaviour in a work situation.
5. Foundation skills and knowledge, not only literacy and numeracy skills, but also skills that provide a foundation for applying technical knowledge and skills, (such as digital literacy, learning, problem solving, innovation, communication and reflection skills) and a basic understanding of the world of work.

## 1.9 **An operative program design for school to work transition**

Finally, Charles Sturt University proposes a school to work transition program design that we believe would deliver positive results at the individual, institutional and community level, our 10-part design includes:

1. Effective assessment.
2. Real communication and active motivation.
3. Fitness for purpose.
4. Value for money.
5. Logistics – including technological considerations and professional development needed for teachers and other stakeholders to deliver.
6. Reliability – training and education consistency and assessment over time.
7. Validity – drawing upon many sources of evidence.
8. Fairness – by avoiding any bias created by elements that are not being assessed (such as lack of familiarity with the language or context).
9. Credibility – amongst those who have a stake in the outcomes of the assessment.
10. Simplicity and clarity.

#### 1.10 **Gain in school and how this contributes to supporting students to prepare for post-secondary education and training**

Charles Sturt University provides a series of recommendations to improve gain in school and how this contributes to supporting students to prepare for post-secondary education and training in this submission. Please refer to the recommendations set out earlier in this Section under the following key elements of Australia's school to work transition system:

- School to work transition program design.
- School to work transition program outputs.
- School to work transition stakeholder responsibilities.
- School to work transition priority areas.
- School to work transition measurement and reporting.

#### 1.11 **Better inform and support students in relation to post-school education and training**

Charles Sturt University provides a series of recommendations to better inform and support students in relations to post-secondary education and training in this submission. Please refer to the recommendations set out earlier in this Section under the following key elements of Australia's school to work transition system:

- School to work transition program outputs.
- School to work transition stakeholder responsibilities.
- School to work transition priority areas.
- School to work transition measurement and reporting.
- An effective policy framework for school to work transition.
- An operative program design for school to work transition.

#### 1.12 **Other possible initiatives to enhance school to work transition outcomes**

Charles Sturt University provides a series of recommendations in relation to other possible initiatives that could enhance school to work transition outcomes in this submission. Please refer to the recommendations set out earlier in this Section above under the following key elements of Australia's school to work transition system:

- School to work transition policy outcomes.
- School to work transition program design.
- School to work transition program outputs.

- School to work transition priority areas.
- An effective policy framework for school to work transition.
- An operative program design for school to work transition.

## Independent Review Regional, Rural and Remote Education

### Australian Government

29 August 2018

## 2. Recommendations

Charles Sturt University recommends the following with regard strengthening Australia's regional, rural and remote education system for better economic, social and environmental outcomes for students and our communities across Australia:

### 2.1 The gap in educational achievement between regional, rural and remote students and metropolitan students

***Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:***

- ***That student aspiration and capability built in and through schools be recognised as essential for regional, rural and remote educational outcomes and that governments directly invest in this area of comparative market failure (when compared to metropolitan outcomes).***
- ***That educational pathway options for regional, rural and remote students be greatly expanded to materially deliver access and equity gains for non-metropolitan Australians. Refer to recommendations provided by Charles Sturt University in submission to the Senate Education and Training Committee Inquiry of 7 July 2017 regarding the proposed Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment (A More Sustainable, Responsive and Transparent Higher Education System) Bill 2017).***
- ***The design, development and delivery by higher education training providers of a greater range of Bachelor programs that articulate from vocational education and training (VET) diplomas and Certificate 4s, including greater integration between levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF), including amendment of National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (NVR) and Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) regulations to enable nesting of VET and higher education qualifications and vice versa.***
- ***That Government, Schools and tertiary education continue to focus and investment in participation and success programs by government, schools and tertiary education and training providers, including continuation and expansion of HEPPP, particularly in regional, rural and remote Australia.***

***Again refer recommendations provided by Charles Sturt University in submission to the Senate Education and Training Committee Inquiry of 7 July 2017 regarding the proposed Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment (A More Sustainable, Responsive and Transparent Higher Education System) Bill 2017).***

### 2.2 The key barriers and challenges that impact on the educational outcomes of regional, rural and remote students, including aspirations and access issues

**Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:**

- ***That governments design and implement funded programs that support pathways for non-traditional students in regional, rural and remote Australia, building on the successful interventions and learnings of the University.***
- ***That governments design and implement pathway programs that build on the regional retention results of the Graduate Outcomes Survey and the crucial role the University plays in developing and securing skills for the regional workforce, which in turn supports the viability of regional businesses and communities.***
- ***That governments provide additional funding for the University to work with schools and their communities in promoting the benefits of, and developing aspiration for, higher education across non-metropolitan Australia. This work has been demonstrated to be a prime influence in the increasing number of university enrolments by regional, rural and remote students reported in the national data.***
- ***That governments provide additional support and funding to enable higher education to provide role models (for example, university academics, graduates working in the community, and non-metropolitan focused teaching, learning and research institutes such as the proposed Murray Darling Medical School), noting that for universities to be able to continue to influence regional secondary students in this crucial area public funding will be required.***
- ***That to provide an appropriate evidence base, government support and expand Charles Sturt University's pilot research into the barriers and challenges that impact on the educational outcomes of regional, rural and remote students (CIN Educational Consulting & Charles Sturt University, Office of Indigenous Affairs). This work would include aspirations and access issues to address this as a first step to enabling all regional, rural, remote school leaders, onsite access to contextually relevant, face-to-face professional learning and on-going support.***
- ***That governments, collectively utilise individual rural and remote schools as the contextual centre for professional development for principals and school executives. Such work would include ongoing and professional support, delivered by experienced rural and remote education experts insitu.***
- ***That State governments partner with universities, such as Charles Sturt, to prepare and accredit professional development for educators specifically for rural and remote school leadership in rural and remote communities throughout Australia, this would include pre-teaching appointment and on-going insitu professional development and mentoring.***
- ***The Review team examine Charles Sturt University's early research findings referred to herein and conduct consultations within the pilot communities that this nascent work is being undertaken in, as well as request the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training to partner with the University to progress this research enquiry for tailored,***

*contextualised and insitu professional development of rural and remote educators for improvement of student learning outcomes (CIN Educational Consulting & Charles Sturt University, Office of Indigenous Affairs).*

- 2.3 The appropriateness and effectiveness of current modes of education delivered to these students, including the use of information and communications technology and the importance of face to face regional, rural and remote education provision

*Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:*

- *That the Commonwealth Government, as a matter of national urgency, immediately review, refine and revise its information technology and communications policies, to ensure that all Australians, including those in regional, rural and remote Australia have world's-best access to the internet.*
- *To this end, the Commonwealth Government's national broadband network initiative be expanded to provide full fibre (or equivalent) to the home for all regional, rural and remote Australians, noting that failure to do so will consign non-metropolitan Australia to great education disadvantage and irrelevance in the digital century.*
- *That technology and communications related initiatives in the Commonwealth Government's Regions 2030 Unlocking Opportunity policy statement be revised to reflect the two recommendations above, and that following revision of the policy statement and our two recommendations above be funded in full and implemented as a matter of priority to ensure a viable future for regional, rural and remote Australia.*
- *That technology and communications related initiatives in the Commonwealth Government's Regions 2030 Unlocking Opportunity policy statement be revised to reflect the two recommendations above, and that follow revision the policy statement and our two recommendations above by funded in full and implemented as a matter of priority to ensure a viable future for regional, rural and remote Australia.*
- *That government devise new and effective ways of financing information technology and communications access, hardware and software for regional, rural and remote students and their family's that consider the often very short life spans of technology products, noting that current public funding models to do not take into account the useful life of technology, and therefore subject regional, rural and remote students to additional disadvantage over their metropolitan peers.*
- *Finally, Charles Sturt University supports the recommendations provided by Mr Craig Petersen, the Principal of Denison College of Secondary Education and Deputy President of the New South Wales Secondary Principal's Council, in his submission to the Independent Review of Regional, Rural and Remote Education.*

*Also, refer to recommendations in Section 1.5 below.*



2.4 The effectiveness of public policies and programs that have been implemented to bridge the divide

*Charles Sturt University supports the recommendations provided by Mr Craig Petersen, the Principal of Denison College of Secondary Education and Deputy President of the New South Wales Secondary Principal's Council, in his submission to the Independent Review of Regional, Rural and Remote Education.*

*Charles Sturt University has made a number of other recommendations in Section 4.5, that we believe would strengthen effectiveness of public policies and programs that have been implemented to bridge the divide between regional, rural and remote education outcomes and those of metropolitan Australia.*

2.5 The gaps and opportunities to help students successfully transition from school to further study, training and employment

*Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:*

1. *Development of complementary investment in soft resources that leverage the use of existing hard resource facilities in regional Australia.*
2. *An agile funding model that removes barriers to cross-sector collaboration and rewards engagement with community and industry. In particular, a dedicated strategy to enable education providers to develop seamless transitions between Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education providers (Acer: [credit based pathways in tertiary education](#)) (NCVER; a half-open door: pathways for VET award holders into Australian universities 2013), including:
  - *a continuing focus on implementing the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) operational guidelines for pathways, in particular working towards guaranteed entry into Higher Education courses for VET award holders;*
  - *combined educational leadership from all three sectors, with dedicated, senior roles that hold responsibility for collaboration and education pathways;*
  - *investment in systems to monitor student progress and achievements within and between all three sectors (enabled through the Universal Student Identifier (USI)); and,*
  - *accessible, well-structured information about pathway options for students and key influencers (including parents and careers counsellors).**
3. *A model that has a core function of maximising the use of technology and capacity building around digital service delivery in a way that addresses disparities in regional capacity and ability (Morgan, 2016) and addresses*

**substantial growth in regional to metropolitan migration for Higher Education study (a 75 per cent increase between 2008 – 2014) (National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education; Regional Student Participation and Migration 2017).**

- 4. Education pathways that address existing and emerging workforce needs, customised for regional communities. The pathways should have a focus on digital ability, critical thinking and entrepreneurship and critically, expose students to industry and vice versa.**
- 5. Incentives for earlier and deeper collaboration between both the schools and VET sectors, and the Higher Education sector. This would include more opportunities for schools and VET students (and key influencers such as parents) to engage with their local education providers both within the school, VET campus and on Higher Education campuses.**
- 6. More coordination around pathway promotions within schools, between Higher Education and Vocational education providers, with the intent of reducing duplication and triplication activities (and to ensure that no school misses out).**
- 7. A continuing focus on the professional development of community and industry leaders within regional Australia, alongside and in collaboration with educational leaders. This professional development should focus on building an advanced capability for collaboration in complex and changing environments, managing ambiguity and stakeholder engagement.**
- 8. A core requirement, for digital ability and capacity be raised. Digital inclusion research indicates that regional Australians are 20 per cent less likely to use online technologies to manage their work and personal lives than the national average (Roy Morgan, Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2016). With technological impacts cited as one of five disruptive megatrends for the next 10 years by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC: [what is a megatrend and why do they matter?](#)), a dedicated focus will help to bridge this gap.**
- 9. A broader definition of information and communications technology (ICT) investment within education sectors. While Professor Halsey's Discussion Paper touches on the need for innovation in the use of ICT (Pages 33 & 34), it does not address regional disparities associated with community ability in the use of ICT. Specific investment is required to ensure that once technologies are accessible, teachers and educational leaders can make the best use of this technology. This would include investment in best practice use of videoconferencing and collaboration between networks of connected education providers.**
- 10. A continued focus on providing opportunities for students to access education and training in the regional areas that they reside. Students who study in regional areas tend to remain in regional areas after graduation and provide a ready supply of professionals to fill critical regional roles (Acer:**

**Credit based pathway in tertiary education).**

2.6 Innovative approaches that support regional, rural and remote students to succeed in school and in their transition to further study, training and employment

*Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:*

- *that the Aspiration and Outreach agenda be continued;*
- *that university school zones for partnership activity between universities be established to allow for greater collaboration between institutions;*
- *ongoing targeted support tailored to address access, participation and success issues faced by Indigenous peoples who reside in regional, rural and remote areas; and,*
- *strategies to enhance Indigenous participation should be designed in conjunction with local communities and embrace a whole of university approach.*

*Furthermore, in this respect, Charles Sturt University recommends ongoing targeted support tailored to address access, participation and success issues faced by Indigenous peoples who reside in regional, rural and remote areas.*

*We also recommend that strategies used should be designed in conjunction with local communities and embrace a whole of university approach. That is, success in this area will not be enhanced by central, standardised approaches. For example, Charles Sturt University's Strong Moves mentoring program, links to Future Moves and to the Indigenous Student Centres at the University. This mentoring program was built in consultation with parents and students from our local communities and provides a seamless relationship for school students with staff and students in the University.*

2.7 Charles Sturt University - Learnings from regional New South Wales and Victoria and potential intervention strategies to boost regional, rural and remote educational outcomes.

*Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:*

- *that the Aspiration and Outreach agenda be continued;*
- *the proposed budget reforms that remove enabling funding to be rejected;*
- *that consideration is given to the need for additional strategies to effectively support and engage regional rural and remote students who study by distance education; and,*
- *that three-year funding streams for outreach funding are established.*

*Furthermore, Charles Sturt University supports a minimum three-year HEPPP funding stream to encourage schools' continued partnerships and*

**participation, as per the August 2017 EPHEA statement:**

***This three-year funding stream would mean that equity practitioners can coordinate widening participation and retention programs, resources and partnerships more effectively and sustainably.***

***(EPHEA 2017, Information to Government Representatives regarding the Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment [A More Sustainable, Responsive and Transparent Higher Education System] Bill 2017.)***

***We also recommend that the Independent Review into Regional Rural and Remote Education examine the early research findings from work currently underway, including that of Charles Sturt University. In particular, we recommend that the Review consult face-to-face with the pilot schools and communities and drive a partnership with the University to progress the pilot and research enquiry.***

***Finally, we recommend that the Review team consider the early trends emerging from this research and partner with Charles Sturt University for further development of the model.***

## Reforms to Modernise Australia's Visa System

### **Australian Government - Department of Immigration and Border Protection**

**15 September 2017**

#### **1. Recommendations**

Charles Sturt University recommends the following reforms to modernise Australia's visa system:

##### **1.1 Policy Consultation Paper - Visa Simplification: Transforming Australia's Visa System**

- (1) Scope for reduction in the number of visas from 99 at present, to approximately ten visas

Charles Sturt University recommends that:

- all changes to the visa system are announced with adequate time to prepare and educate the market with clarity around the policy settings of changes to the visa system;
- changes to the visa system reduce processing times and ensure consistency in outcomes;
- any changes to the visa system are made with recognition to the differing characteristics of applicants in Australia's diverse education system;
- the retention of a class of visa that support post study work opportunities for graduates of Australian universities; and,
- that the government should maintain short term visa pathways (such as the current 600, 601, 651 and 400) that allow for overseas academics and specialists to enter Australia for short periods of time to undertake highly specialised activities and attend academic meetings.

- (2) Delineation between temporary entry and long-term or permanent residence

Charles Sturt University recommends the retention of a class of visa that support post study work opportunities for graduates of Australian universities.

- (3) Role a period of provisional residence could play in enhancing the integrity of the visa system and easing the burden on taxpayers

Charles Sturt University recommends:

- retention of a class of visa that support post study work opportunities for graduates of Australian universities;

- recognising time spent studying in Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency; and,
- a period of provisional residence could indeed assist the enhancement of the integrity of the visa system by securing our investment and retaining our best people. This could be achieved by individuals remaining with their sponsoring institution or their nominated occupation for a defined period. However, the implementation of provisional residence as the only pathway for permanent residency could also be a hindrance for our sector and a flexible approach is necessary in order to:
  - not limit the ability of academics to apply for competitive Category 1 funding;
  - provide settlement opportunities (for example, ability to secure mortgages); and,
  - ensure the reduction in exposure to additional costs of living, such as;
    - state-based fees for public schooling; and
    - health care costs.

(4) Ensuring that our visa system supports Australia as a competitive and attractive destination for temporary and longer-term entrants

Charles Sturt University recommends:

- that all changes to the visa system are announced with adequate time to prepare and educate the market with clarity around the policy settings of changes to the visa system;
- that changes to the visa system reduce processing times and ensure consistency in outcomes;
- that the financial support threshold or application fees are not increased against key competitor markets;
- the retention of a class of visa that support post study work opportunities for graduates of Australian Universities;
- no change to existing framework for dependents and other family members extended to student visa holders; and,
- consideration of increases to - the number of student visas for students who elect to study in a non-metropolitan location.

(5) Simplifying our visa arrangements

(a) What would a system with approximately 10 visas look like?

Charles Sturt University recommends that:

- any changes to the visa system are made with recognition to the differing characteristics of applicants in Australia's diverse education system;
- all changes to the visa system are announced with adequate time to prepare and educate the market with clarity around the policy settings of changes to the visa system;
- changes to the visa system reduce processing times and ensure consistency in outcomes; and,
- the financial support threshold or application fees are not increased against key competitor markets.

(6) What factors should we consider when simplifying the visa system?

Charles Sturt University recommends that:

- assessing visa applications are supported by clear, standardised and objective criteria,
- consideration be given to administrative processes that increase efficiencies delivering savings in time processing and consistency of outcomes,
- all changes to the visa system are announced with adequate time to prepare and educate the market with clarity around the policy settings of changes to the visa system; and,
- the financial support threshold or application fees are not increased against key competitor markets.

Charles Sturt University also refers the Department, to the University's recent submission to the Inquiry into Regional Development and Decentralisation which is currently being undertaken by the Select Committee of Regional Development and Decentralisation of the House of Representatives of the Australian Parliament, which contains a range of recommendations regarding international students studying in regional Australia.

(7) What should be the key characteristics of a simplified and flexible visa system?

Charles Sturt University recommends that:

- assessing visa applications are supported by clear, standardised and objective criteria; and,

- consideration be given to administrative processes that increase efficiencies delivering savings in time processing and consistency of outcomes.

(8) Temporary and permanent residence

(a) What distinctions should apply to temporary and permanent visas?

Charles Sturt University recommends:

- the retention of a class of visa that support post study work opportunities for graduates of Australian universities;
- considering increasing the number of student visas for students who elect to study in a non-metropolitan location;
- recognising time spent studying in Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency; and,
- recognising time spent studying in regional Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency.

(b) What requirements should underpin a migrant's eligibility for permanent residence?

Charles Sturt University recommends:

- recognising time spent studying in Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency; and,
- recognising time spent studying in regional Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency.

(c) Should a prospective migrant spend a period of time in Australia before becoming eligible for permanent residence? What factors should be considered?

Charles Sturt University recommends:

- recognising time spent studying in Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency;
- recognising time spent studying in regional Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency; and,



- providing consideration to the provision of an extended post-study work rights are lengthened should employment in regional areas be prioritised by the applicants who find employment in regional areas of Australia.

(9) Modernising Australia's visa arrangements

- (a) What role does the visa system play in ensuring Australia remains attractive to the best and brightest temporary and permanent migrants?

Charles Sturt University recommends:

- that all changes to the visa system are announced with adequate time to prepare and educate the market with clarity around the policy settings of changes to the visa system;
- that consideration be given to administrative processes that increase efficiencies delivering savings in time processing and consistency in outcomes;
- that changes to the visa system are made with reference to the settings imposed by key international education competitor markets; and,
- the retention of a class of visa that support post study work opportunities for graduates of Australian Universities.

- (b) Will an efficient visa system that is simple to understand and quickly assesses risk make Australia a more attractive destination? Why?

Charles Sturt University recommends that:

- consideration be given to administrative processes that increase efficiencies delivering savings in time processing and consistency in outcomes;
- changes to the visa system are made with reference to the settings imposed by key international education competitor markets; and,
- all changes to the visa system are announced with adequate time to prepare and educate the market with clarity around the policy settings of changes to the visa system.

- (c) To what extent should the Government collect biometrics from visa applicants?

Charles Sturt University recommends that all changes to the visa system are announced with adequate time to prepare and educate the

market with clarity around the policy settings of changes to the visa system.

## 1.2 **Delivering visa services for Australia - Market Consultation Paper**

- (1) Ways to create an efficient, sustainable and innovative service delivery model

Charles Sturt University recommends:

- consideration be given to administrative processes that increase efficiencies delivering savings in time processing and consistency in outcomes; and,
- changes to the visa system are made with reference to the settings imposed by key international education competitor markets.

- (2) New technologies and innovative solutions to help design and build a global digital visa processing platform

Charles Sturt University recommends that:

- consideration be given to administrative processes that increase efficiencies delivering savings in time processing and consistency in outcomes; and,
- changes to the visa system are made with reference to the settings imposed by key international education competitor markets.

## 1.3 **Attracting and Retaining World-Class Teaching, Learning and Research Workforce**

Refer commentary and suggestions provided in Section 4.4 below.

## 1.4 **Distinguished Talent Pathway – Barriers to World-Class Workforce Attraction**

Refer commentary and suggestions provided in Section 4.5 below.

## [Inquiry on the Impact of Technological and Other Change on the Future of Work and Workers in Australia](#)

### Select Committee on the Future of Work and Workers

20 February 2018

#### 1. Recommendations

Charles Sturt University recommends the following with regard the future of work and future workforce capabilities:

##### 1.1 The Future Nature of Work

*Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:*

*That:*

- *Technology literacy will be crucial to maximise participation in workforce of the future.*
- *Future workforce productivity will depend on individual talent that is creative, innovative, entrepreneurial and resilient.*
- *Individuals, as well as education and training providers, must be incentivised to undertake and provide science, technology, arts, engineering and maths (STEAM) studies, as well as globally-focused commercial studies, particularly international markets and finance.*
- *Australia must aim to exceed the OECD average for public R&D expenditure in support of the recommendations above.*
- *Building on initiatives, such as the National Science and Innovation Agenda (NISA), see <http://www.innovation.gov.au> and the Prosperity Through Innovation Statement of January 2018, see <https://industry.gov.au/Innovation-and-Science-Australia/Pages/default.aspx>, Australian governments must adopt a national technology transformation agenda, much like the leadership shown by the Victorian Government in the 1990s with regards multimedia.*

##### 1.2 Impact of the Changing Nature of Work

*Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:*

*That building on the recommendations put forward above, governments and the private sector will not only have to continue but increase investment in technology infrastructure, as “nice-to-have” infrastructure becomes “critical-utility” for future economic and social development, for example broadband connectivity being the railway line of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*

##### 1.3 Wide Effect of the Changing Nature of Work on the Economy, Society and the Environment

*Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:*

***That, building on University Australia’s 2010 work regarding Australia’s future academic workforce, <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/news/commissioned-studies/Academic-Workforce#.WnOZnkxuJjo>, that the Australian Government, through COAG develop and implement, with the tertiary education and training sector, a national strategy for ensuring Australia maintains and assembles a technology-orientated academic workforce through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.***

#### 1.4 Adequacy of Legislative Frameworks for the Future Nature of Work

***That the Australian Government, work with industry, unions and the tertiary education and training sector to undertake a review of, develop and implement findings, of the Fair Work Act 2009 and related legislative instruments to ensure that Australia’s industrial relations system is 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology fit-for-purpose to ensure international competitiveness for the future of work.***

#### 1.5 International Efforts – Capturing the Opportunities and Meeting the Challenges of the Future Workforce

***Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:***

***That the Commonwealth Government commission suitable service providers to undertake a comprehensive review of international efforts aimed at capturing the opportunities and meeting the challenges of the future nature of work, with the report providing the basis for stakeholder consultation regarding the future of work and the nation’s workforce.***

#### 1.6 Other Future Work and Workforce Considerations – In Regional, Rural and Remote Communities

***Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations:***

***That the recommendations detailed above regarding the future of work and the future workforce be developed and implemented with specific consideration given to the specific circumstances and unique needs of regional cities, rural towns and remote communities across Australia.***

## [Advice on the Impacts of Professional Accreditation in Higher Education](#)

### **The Higher Education Standards Panel**

**30 April 2018**

#### **1. Recommendations**

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations regarding the Higher Education Standards Panel's (the Panel) advice on the impact of professional accreditation in Australian higher education and opportunities to reduce the regulatory burden on higher education providers:

##### **1.1 Assessment for Accreditation of Professional Competencies**

***Charles Sturt University recommends that the findings of the Higher Education Standards Panel's regarding the accreditation assessment of professional competencies by professional associations as set out in *The Higher Education Standards Panel's Advice on the Impacts of Professional Accreditation in Higher Education*, be accepted by the Government and be implemented in full.***

##### **1.2 Professional Associations - Accreditation Capability & Capacity**

***Charles Sturt University recommends that the findings of the Higher Education Standards Panel's regarding the capability and capacity of professional associations to accredit university graduates and tomorrow's future workforce as set out in *The Higher Education Standards Panel's Advice on the Impacts of Professional Accreditation in Higher Education*, be accepted by the Government and be implemented in full, subject to the Commonwealth ensuring that the:***

- policies, procedures and systems of accrediting organisations be simplified, streamlined and aligned wherever possible, particularly at the course level, but also at the discipline and industry level too;***
- enhanced management, administration and reporting mechanisms proposed by the Panel do not incur additional costs for higher education providers; and,***
- common, technology platform solution only be implemented if the Government is prepared to provide sufficient funding to ensure such a solutions success – both in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.***

##### **1.3 Stakeholder Engagement – Education Providers & Professional Associations**

***Charles Sturt University recommends that the findings of the Higher Education Standards Panel's regarding the Government's forward stakeholder engagement with education providers and professional associations to ensure the most efficient and effective professional accreditation system possible in Australia for tomorrow's future workforce as set out in *The Higher Education Standards Panel's Advice on the Impacts of Professional Accreditation in****

***Higher Education, be accepted by the Government and be not only implemented in full but be strengthened to ensure as close as possible to align policy, streamline process and integrate system for accreditation efficiency and effectiveness.***

**1.4 Observations from Regional Australia - Professional Accreditation**

***Charles Sturt University recommends that particular attention be given to research, findings, analysis and recommendations regarding professional accreditation in regional Australia, to ensure the regional higher education providers can efficiently and effectively work with professional accreditation organisations to ensure that Australia's regional cities, rural towns and remote communities have access to the professional workforce required today and into the future to ensure the prosperity of non-metropolitan Australians.***

## Closing the Gap – the Next Phase

### Australian Government

30 April 2018

#### 1. Recommendations

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations regarding future Closing the Gap reforms, policies, initiatives and programs:

##### 1.1 Recognising the Value of Tertiary Education & Training

*Charles Sturt University recommends that:*

- i. the value of tertiary education and training be recognised in the ongoing Closing the Gap agenda, not just for school leavers and young adults, but all First Nations people including Elders.*
- ii. all education programs are designed to enable all First Nations students to engage in their own education in ways that enable them to achieve the successful outcomes they desire from the learning experience. Life experience, closely aligned with language and culture, is a strong determinant in what students want to learn and how they wish to pursue the necessary learning experiences.*
- iii. real progress to close the gap through tertiary education and training will depend on all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous working together to effect change, adoption of enhanced reporting mechanisms, measuring actual performance with meaningful and tangible indicators, valuing culture and custom in study and agreeing targets for responsibility of management and accountability of governance.*
- iv. unlocking the value of tertiary education and training will require:*
  - equality of study outcome, not just equity in participation;*
  - learner support to ensure capacity for moving forward and better futures;*
  - greater reach, depth and presence in remote Australia, including recognising the role of digital technology and face-to-face study hubs, but that the logistical and financial challenges associated with connectivity in remote communities and locations must be overcome;*
  - de-alienation of learning spaces, including actions to overcome sheer loneliness and inability to engage; and,*
  - continual improvement and investment in pathways from school to tertiary education and training, as well as for adults (without accredited qualifications or who have disengaged from formal education) to access vocational education and training as well as higher education.*

## 1.2 Enabling People to Work Effectively Together

***Charles Sturt University recommends that real progress to close the gap through tertiary education and training will depend on all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous working together to effect change, including through:***

- ***commitment to a process of genuine and meaningful engagement that reduces and, in the future eliminates systemically and structurally racist ideas and beliefs;***
- ***acceptance and recognition, including constitutionally, legally through treaty and truth commission;***
- ***authentic collaborative conversations that enable Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to work together for a better future;***
- ***address feelings of inadequacy through recognition of the genuine challenges of learning in remote communities, and being from a remote community;***
- ***building and maintaining relationships with communities to support greater involvement in learning needs;***
- ***cultural competency training and education for institutional staff (and students);***
- ***draw on educators and trainers with learned-experiences;***
- ***inclusion of these themes in curriculum, for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students; and,***
- ***above all else, in concert with key stakeholders provide a welcoming environment in which to learn.***

## 1.3 Enhancing Reporting

***Charles Sturt University recommends that real progress to close the gap through tertiary education and training will depend on adoption of enhanced reporting mechanisms, including through reporting processes that:***

- ***are informative and transparent;***
- ***allow for Indigenous Australian's to be respected and have their say about what matters to them, and what is important to report on;***
- ***are collaborative in nature, with Indigenous ownership;***
- ***are genuinely consultative and outcomes focused (rather than "tick-the-box" bureaucracy);***
- ***draw on feedback and really focus on need for change;***
- ***manage and report quality and risk of reconciliation through continual improvement and a constant quest for Elder input and knowledge; and,***
- ***inclusion of non-Indigenous students and staff of education and training institutions in equity and equality and the interplay between all cultures.***



#### 1.4 Using More Effective & Meaningful Performance Indicators

***Charles Sturt University recommends that real progress to close the gap through tertiary education and training will depend on measuring actual performance with meaningful and tangible indicators, including through:***

- ***development of an agreed definition of what closing the gap in education means, what it is expected to deliver and how success will be measured (beyond NAPLAN, Year 12 completion etc.);***
- ***metrics for education and training institutions commitment to First Nations;***
- ***ensuring non-Indigenous Australians learning about First Nations' culture, custom, people and communities, at the regional and local level, again with metrics for progress***
- ***metrics must take into account that not all Indigenous people, their Nations and their cultures are the same;***
- ***customised and targeted education and training performance measurement that is culturally inclusive and linguistically appropriate (learning from the poor integration of NAPLAN questions with Indigenous and remote community cultures);***
- ***consistent with 1.2 and 1.3 above, metrics should be developed and refined by listening to Indigenous Australians to ensure outcomes are tangible and real (and genuinely understanding need to close the gap); and,***
- ***recognising that effective and meaningful key performance indicators are crucial to close gaps – as, what gets measured gets done.***

#### 1.5 Enabling People to Understand & Value Their Differences

***Charles Sturt University recommends that real progress to close the gap through tertiary education and training will depend on all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous valuing culture and custom in study, including through:***

- ***education journeys that are grounded within First People's own cultures and languages;***
- ***providing a sense of belonging that ensures that Indigenous students become critically engaged in the learning process;***
- ***recognising that reconciliation is more than a legal definition of title, but is more about connection to country, and the nation's history, knowledge, language, culture and stories;***
- ***strategies to combat disadvantage and promote positive futures embedded in teaching and learning plans;***
- ***revitalising language as a solution for inclusivity, including education and training delivery in First Nation languages and teaching of First Nation languages to non-Indigenous Australians, particularly at the regional level;***
- ***not only empowering students, but also enabling a quality of learning engagement that is equally satisfying for the teacher and fellow learners;***

- *striving to ensure that the world in which we live is one that values us as human beings who are valued for our ‘common humanity’, ie. we measure our worth by the way we are treated by others; and,*
- *as the basis for enabling people to understand and value their differences adopt a both ways education model for future teaching, learning and research in primary, secondary and tertiary education.*

## 1.6 Enabling People to Commit to Targets for Responsibility & Accountability

*Charles Sturt University recommends that real progress to close the gap through tertiary education and training will depend on all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous agreeing targets for responsibility of management and accountability of governance, including through:*

- *traditional knowledge, shared understanding and be evidence-based, or at the very least, be embedded in research that will provide a future empirical evidence base; and,*
- *performance management descriptors that promote, encourage and reward closing the gap initiatives in education and training, at the organisational, contractual (in the case of service delivery agreements) and personnel level, including, but not limited to the following higher education commitments and targets for responsibility and accountability:*
  - a. further development of cultural competency frameworks which clearly map targets for responsibility and accountability across training organisations and education providers;*
  - b. further formal research into decolonising and indigenising measures;*
  - c. development of research that identifies and focusses on the aspirations of local Indigenous communities within the sphere of across training organisation and education provider influence;*
  - d. developing innovative and engaging online training courses in cultural competency for all staff throughout their term of employment. Where possible, modules will be developed, and face-to-face delivery will be undertaken by qualified Indigenous staff;*
  - e. the review of all hybrid subjects to ensure cultural competency is achieved across training organisations and education providers and the tertiary education system (possibly through ASQA and TEQSA);*

- f. the Indigenous schools of training organisations and tertiary education providers will undertake community-based research to build and maintain relationships between all education and training providers including, the secondary school system, and industry or local businesses; and,***
- g. student participation and retention in Indigenous knowledge and cultural subjects to be measured through internal analytics generated from enrolments, face to face and online student activity across training organisations and education providers.***



## 1. Recommendations

Charles Sturt University make the following recommendations to the House of Representatives Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation regarding its inquiry into regional development and decentralisation and the commentary and thinking detailed in the Committee's recently released issues paper, *Issues Paper – House of Representatives Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation – Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia*:

### 1.1 Outcomes arising from effective regional development

**Charles Sturt University recommends that a regional development framework with the seven outcomes as detailed in Section 4, be agreed through a national partnership comprising all levels of government and that pragmatic and measurable goals and objectives be attached to each outcome**

#### (1) **Growing regional populations to ensure internationally competitive relevance, increased standard of living and improved quality of life**

Charles Sturt University recommends:

- Support the establishment of regional export boards to help start-up and other businesses sell their product outside of their region to other regions in Australia and overseas.
- Facilitate local purchasing initiatives through establishment of databases in regional and rural areas and their promotion. Work with LGAs to achieve this.
- Support engagement of universities with local businesses to encourage knowledge transfer and innovation. Fund universities for business extension activities.
- Fund activities for encouraging the emergence of entrepreneurs and the filtering and developing of their ideas. Business incubators are one form of this, but are placed based and usually are in larger centres. Fund programs that are also accessible in smaller regional centres.
- Support local leadership through increased funding for Regional Development Australia (RDA). Provide additional program funding so that the RDA has more resources to influence outcomes in the regions.
- Fund regional and rural economic gardening programs, in addition to regional incubators.
- Support access to innovative forms of financing in regional and rural areas.

Furthermore, Charles Sturt University recommends the design, development and implementation of individual, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up,

system integrated development plans as the primary mechanism to grow regional populations to ensure internationally competitive relevance, increased standard of living and improved quality of life for people living in regional Australia.

(2) **Sharing economic, social, cultural and environmental access and equity between regional and metropolitan Australia**

Charles Sturt University recommends greater public investment in community-based and participatory processes to engage researchers with local communities, share and exchange knowledge as well as encourage social renewal and ecological restoration as a way of sharing economic, social, cultural and environmental access and equity between regional and metropolitan Australia.

Furthermore, Charles Sturt University recommends the design, development and implementation of individual, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up, system integrated development plans as the primary mechanism to share economic, social, cultural and environmental access and equity between regional and metropolitan Australia.

(3) **Enabling world-class experiences, cutting-edge skills development and global-knowledge transfer for people living in the regions**

Charles Sturt University recommends greater public investment in community-based and participatory processes to engage researchers with local communities, share and exchange knowledge as well as encourage social renewal and ecological restoration as a way of diversifying local economic activity and sustainable production industries.

Furthermore, Charles Sturt University recommends the design, development and implementation of individual, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up, system integrated development plans as the primary mechanism to enable world-class experiences, cutting-edge skills development and global-knowledge transfer for people living in regional Australia.

(4) **Increasing participation and productivity rates in regional economies, while concomitantly reducing future economic risk through diversification**

Charles Sturt University recommends the design, development and implementation of individual, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up, system integrated development plans as the primary mechanism to boost participation rates and increase productivity performance of the regions.

(5) **Attracting and retaining private and public-sector investment, including foreign investment in the industries and infrastructure needs of the future**

Charles Sturt University recommends the design, development and implementation of individual, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up,

system integrated development plans as the primary mechanism to attract and retain private and public-sector investment to regional cities, rural towns and remote communities, including foreign investment in the industries and infrastructure needs of the future.

(6) **Enhancing the vibrancy, cohesiveness and engagement of regional communities, particularly regional cities**

Charles Sturt University recommends the design, development and implementation of individual, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up, system integrated development plans as the primary mechanism to enhancing the vibrancy, cohesiveness and engagement of regional communities, particularly regional cities.

(7) **Positioning regional cities, not just as local service centres, but as places with unique value propositions and competitive advantages on a national and an international scale**

Charles Sturt University recommends:

- That regional governance approaches build on the large body of work undertaken in Australia, including at Charles Sturt University, on governance.
- That a systems approach, that is, one that recognises a region as a social ecological system with emergent properties, is taken when developing collective governance arrangements.
- That reflection on and in practice is a fundamental element of any approach to decentralisation or nesting of governance, and that the capacity to act on reflection is facilitated through implementation and reporting frameworks developed.
- That local people are given a real voice, that is, that collaboration rather than consultation is the key aim.

Furthermore, Charles Sturt University recommends the design, development and implementation of individual, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up, system integrated development plans as the primary mechanism to position regional cities, not just as local service centres, but as places with unique value propositions and competitive advantages on a national and an international scale.

1.2 **Best practice approaches to regional development, considering Australian and international examples**

**Charles Sturt University, recommends that – arms length, bipartisan, beyond cycle and resourced and championed governance and management model be implemented as follows:**

- a. **Through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and including Local Government Association (LGA), the Commonwealth would establish the Australian Regional Development Commission, the Commission would report to COAG, national plan Regions 2030 Unlocking Opportunity could provide the foundations on which to build this.**
- b. **The Commission would be funded 50/50 by the Commonwealth, States and Territories and would work with bodies such as Infrastructure Australia and the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC), with initial seed funding over four years of \$10 billion.**
- c. **Commissioners would be nominated Australia's Regional Development Australia Committees (RDAs) and appointed by a COAG Regional Development Ministerial Council, while the RDAs would be resourced to operate as locally-championed regional branches of the Commission.**
- d. **The Commission would be headquartered in regional Australia, located in Orange or Dubbo as geographically they are in the centre of regional eastern Australia.**

**The RDAs would be resourced to continue and improve their regional planning work, based on the framework set out above and would have greater involvement from rural and remote communities in each area, thereby creating a genuine hub and spoke with a regional city at its core.**

**(1) Long-term policy focus and program effort**

Charles Sturt University recommends that future strategies, actions, tasks and investment for the development of Australia's regions, including our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities be undertaken with long-term policy focus and program effort, and that such focus and effort be removed from the short-term political cycle.

**(2) Strongly facilitated participation**

Charles Sturt University recommends that future strategies, actions, tasks and investment for the development of Australia's regions, including our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities be strongly facilitated and include all stakeholders to ensure widespread understanding and agreement.

**(3) Shared regional vision and leadership**

Charles Sturt University recommends that future strategies, actions, tasks and investment for the development of Australia's regions, including our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities must be built on a foundation of shared regional vision and leadership.

(4) **Governance, coordination, management and operation**

Charles Sturt University recommends that future strategies, actions, tasks and investment for the development of Australia's regions, including our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities be governed and coordinated at the regional level, with management and operation distributed to the communities that comprise each region.

(5) **Planning, reporting and communication framework**

Charles Sturt University recommends that future strategies, actions, tasks and investment for the development of Australia's regions, including our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities be professionally, inclusively, transparently and accountably planned, reported and communicated by the use of rigorous frameworks.

(6) **Champions – individual ownership**

Charles Sturt University recommends that future strategies, actions, tasks and investment for the development of Australia's regions, including our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities be owned and championed by individual members of the community, adopting an at local, think global philosophy of achievement.

(7) **Market-based response**

Charles Sturt University recommends that all future strategies, actions, tasks and investment for the development of Australia's regions, including our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities be designed, developed and implemented using an unashamedly market-based approach, where government is simply a facilitator or non-lead co-investor (with the exception of public investment in economic and social infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals and transport infrastructure).

1.3 **Infrastructure and technology**

**Charles Sturt University recommends an immediate, independent review of the NBN project be undertaken and that the NBN roll-out be significantly strengthened to ensure top-10 OECD ranking fibre to the home broadband services be made available to all Australians living in regional, rural and remote communities and that fibre to the CBD's of each regional city in Australia be increased to 1GBs.**

1.4 **Decentralisation of Commonwealth entities or functions, as a mechanism to increase growth and prosperity in regional areas, considering Australian and international examples**



(1) **Potential for decentralisation to improve governance and service delivery for all Australians, considering the administrative arrangements required for good government**

Charles Sturt University recommends that decentralisation of public agencies must only be considered;

- in the public good to ensure the most efficient, effective and least expensive way of delivering public services takes precedence when considering the physical location of government agencies;
- as a second order issue, in any government's priorities and the planning of a given agency; and, finally,
- in the context of a locally designed, developed and implemented, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up, system integrated development plan, where it unequivocally adds to cluster capability and long-term viability.

(2) **Characteristics of entities that would be suited to decentralisation without impacting on the ability to perform their functions**

Charles Sturt University recommends that decentralisation of public agencies must only be considered;

- in the public good to ensure the that ability of agencies to perform their functions takes precedence when considering the physical location of government agencies;
- as a second order issue, in any government's priorities and the planning of a given agency; and, finally,
- in the context of a locally designed, developed and implemented, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up, system integrated development plan, where it unequivocally adds to cluster capability and long-term viability.

(3) **Characteristics of locations suitable to support decentralised entities or functions, including consideration of infrastructure and communication connectivity requirements**

Charles Sturt University recommends that decentralisation of public agencies must only be considered;

- in the public good to ensure the most efficient, effective and least expensive way of delivering public services takes precedence when considering the physical location of government agencies;
- as a second order issue, in any government's priorities and the infrastructure requirements and communication connectivity planning of a given agency; and, finally,

- in the context of a locally designed, developed and implemented, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up, system integrated development plan, where it unequivocally adds to cluster capability and long-term viability and where the infrastructure requirements and communication connectivity planning of a given agency are already available in a given region or there is a clear and sound public benefit to governments investing in the infrastructure requirements and communication connectivity required for a government agency to relocate (or where such services can be provided by the private sector).

#### (4) **Different models of decentralisation**

##### (i) **Relocation of all or part of a Commonwealth entity to a regional area**

Charles Sturt University recommends that relocation of public agencies, either whole or in part must only be considered;

- in the public good to ensure the most efficient, effective and least expensive way of delivering public services takes precedence when considering the physical location of government agencies;
- as a second order issue, in any government's priorities and the planning of a given agency; and, finally,
- in the context of a locally designed, developed and implemented, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up, system integrated development plan, where it unequivocally adds to cluster capability and long-term viability.

##### (ii) **Decentralisation of specific positions, with individual employees telecommuting, considering any limitations to this in current Australian Public Service employment conditions and rules**

Charles Sturt University recommends that decentralisation of public agencies, either in whole or in part must only be considered;

- in the public good to ensure the most efficient, effective and least expensive way of delivering public services takes precedence when considering the physical location of government agencies;
- as a second order issue, in any government's priorities and the workforce and industrial relations planning of a given agency;

- that governments work with relevant unions and Fair Work Australia to encourage decentralising specific positions, with individual employees telecommuting in regional areas, by reducing the limitations to this in current Australian Public Service employment conditions and rules; and, finally,
- in the context of a locally designed, developed and implemented, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up, system integrated development plan, where it unequivocally adds to cluster capability and long-term viability.

(iii) **Co-location of decentralised Commonwealth entities or employees in existing regionally based Commonwealth or State Government offices**

Charles Sturt University recommends that co-locating decentralised Commonwealth entities or employees in existing regionally based Commonwealth or State Government offices must only be considered;

- in the public good to ensure the most efficient, effective and least expensive way of delivering public services takes precedence when considering the physical location of government agencies;
- as a second order issue, in any government's priorities and the planning of a given agency; and, finally,
- in the context of a locally designed, developed and implemented, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up, system integrated development plan, where it unequivocally adds to cluster capability and long-term viability including through co-location with other government agencies.

(5) **Family, social and community impacts of decentralising**

Charles Sturt University recommends that decentralisation of public agencies must only be considered;

- in the public good to ensure the most efficient, effective and least expensive way of delivering public services takes precedence when considering the physical location of government agencies;
- as a second order issue, in any government's priorities and the planning of a given agency, which would include human capital and resources considerations with regards service delivery capabilities and capacities; and, finally,

- in the context of a locally designed, developed and implemented, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up, system integrated development plan, where it unequivocally adds to cluster capability and long-term viability, which would include regional human capital considerations.

#### 1.5 **Actions of the Commonwealth that would encourage greater corporate decentralisation and what can be learned from corporate decentralisation approaches**

##### **Charles Sturt University recommends:**

- a. government investment in regional development be restricted to public good and public accessible activities, including economic, social, cultural and environmental infrastructure, such as technology, transport, education and training and health; and,**
- b. government provide funding, through the regional development governance and management mechanisms detailed above and through industry departments for the purposes of private sector investment attraction and facilitation, including foreign direct investment, while;**
- c. government must ensure that it does not use tax payers' funds to share or subsidise private sector risk, or be trapped into acting as a lender of last resort to the private sector under any circumstances.**

#### (1) **Role of the private sector in sustainably driving employment and growth opportunities in regional areas in both existing and new industries**

Charles Sturt University recommends that the role of the private sector in sustainably driving employment and growth opportunities in regional areas in both existing and new industries, provide the foundation of locally designed, developed and implemented, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up, system integrated development plans.

Please also refer recommendations suggested throughout Section 4.1, above.

#### (2) **Access to early stage equity and or debt finance of metropolitan and regional businesses for both start up and established businesses**

Charles Sturt University recommends that access to early stage equity and or debt finance of metropolitan and regional business both for start-up and established business be a key investment element of locally designed, developed and implemented, regional-specific, placed-based, bottom-up, system integrated development plans, however financing strategies, actions and tasks must be seen as a mechanism for driving regional development and not as end in themselves, that is, capital raising efforts should only be expended in a given region where future investment builds on the unique value propositions of the given region.

Furthermore, Charles Sturt University, recommends against government providing early stage equity and or debt finance for start-up and early stage businesses, including agribusiness, manufacturing, mining and technology, as business funding should remain the exclusive domain of the private sector to avoid governments positioning themselves as lender of last resort, interest rate subsidisers or exposing tax payers to unnecessary financial risk, such as the experience with the regional investments of the VEDC in Victoria during the 1980s.

Charles Sturt University, does however, recommend that government continue their investment in skills development and knowledge transfer in the entrepreneurial, start-up business and SME transformation, particularly in regional areas to correct the skills and knowledge gap between State capitals and the regions.

Please also refer recommendations suggested throughout Section 4.1, above.

(3) **Access to capital for regional business, including agribusiness, manufacturing and technology**

Charles Sturt University recommends that access to capital for regional business, including agribusiness, manufacturing and technology be a key investment element of locally designed, developed and implemented, regional-specific, place-based, bottom-up, system integrated development plans, however financing strategies, actions and tasks must be seen as a mechanism for driving regional development and not as ends in themselves, that is, capital raising efforts should only be expended in a given region where future investment builds on the unique value propositions of the given region.

Furthermore, Charles Sturt University, recommends against government providing capital for investment by regional businesses, including agribusiness, manufacturing, mining and technology, as business fund should remain the exclusive domain of the private sector to avoid governments positioning themselves as lender of last resort, interest rate subsidisers or exposing tax payers to unnecessary financial risk, such as the experience with the regional investments of the VEDC in Victoria during the 1980s.

Please also refer recommendations suggested throughout Section 4.1, above.

(4) **Adequacy of regional businesses access to early stage accelerators and incubators, including access to business mentors, business networks and capital**

Charles Sturt University recommends that a cornerstone of regional development plans be strengthening regional business access to early stage accelerators and incubators, including access to business skills development, business mentors, business networks, including market access and export development supply chains, not just for start-ups and small entrepreneurial firms, but also for existing regionally-based SMEs that are under immense competitive pressure to technologically transform and adapt their market presence.

Charles Sturt University also recommends:

- a thorough study by funded by the Commonwealth, which would include detailed research and analysis be undertaken of the range of government accelerator and incubation programs, across all three tiers of government, that have been delivered over the last two years across regional Australia so that empirical evidence is made available on what has worked and why, what hasn't worked and why and what could be done to enhance performance; and,
- following this study, the Commonwealth significantly increase its direct investment in regional business accelerators and incubators in the order of \$100 million per annum across regional Australia, with the investment targeted at the acceleration and incubation of export-orientated, born-global firms and the transformation of existing SMEs to high-value export driven businesses.

(5) **Adequacy to support the private sector to attract and retain skilled labour to regional areas**

Charles Sturt University recommends that government place greater public policy focus and increased program investment in the training and education of regional sourced workforces, with increased funding for tertiary education and training, including regional public providers such as TAFE and local universities.

To this end, we make additional recommendations with regard attraction, retention and training and education of skilled labour:

- the Commonwealth adopt the recommendations provided in our submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Higher Education Reform Bill 2017;
- governments adopt the recommendations provided in our recent submissions to the Commonwealth on school to work transition and regional, rural and remote education; and,
- develop a regional training and education policy and suite of programs to strengthen, and off-set the country-city divide in vocational education and training and higher education, particularly in high value skills shortage areas such as engineering, medicine and technology.

Please also refer recommendations put forward throughout Section 4.1 of this submission and Section 4.5(4)(b) above.

(6) **Extent to which employment and growth can be supported by growing existing and new industries in regional areas, leveraging strong transport and communications connectivity**

Please refer recommendations put forward in Section 4.5(4)(b) and other sections of this submission regarding employment and growth best being supported and achieved through growth of existing and new industries in

regional areas that not only leverage existing cluster strengths but significantly add to a given region's unique value propositions and international competitiveness advantages.

1.6 **Murray Darling Medical School – Charles Sturt University leading by example**

***As an example of best-practice regional development leadership, Charles Sturt University recommends that the Commonwealth immediately fund the MDMS through contributing \$50 million over four years to establish a regional medical school that is dedicated to training and retaining doctors in regional, rural and remote Australia. This investment will address chronic doctor shortages; increase higher educational opportunities and deliver lasting economic and social benefits to communities.***